

## **A message from the Chairman**

We have had some wonderful weather recently, although I have to say the few bouts of rain have been welcome. I am endeavouring to create a wildflower meadow and the rain has encouraged the hundreds of plug plants to flourish. The seeds I sowed, though, have been slow to germinate and there are a number of very suspicious looking plants growing that may have taken the opportunity to insert themselves. What they are, I cannot tell, but they look very like thistles to me.

Our new administration system, Beacon, is working well and has much simplified the processing of renewals. 158 members have taken advantage of the facility to renew online, where everything is done automatically – welcome to the 21st century. It's encouraging to see just how many people have renewed their membership, though there are a lot of familiar names on the 'still to do' list. Over 100 of you may be disappointed next month when you don't receive the next newsletter, but surely that pales into insignificance at the prospect of not being able to come to the AGM in September and have – cake! If you haven't renewed, please take the opportunity. The easiest way to do this is online by clicking this [link](#). I do hope that you will renew and remain a member of u3a in Ludlow.

The news from intergalactic Covid response headquarters was disappointing and we have to wait a little longer to know when or whether there will be a resumption of 'normal' life. For the moment we continue to be restricted to indoor meetings of six from different households, though some hardy groups have been taking advantage of recent clement weather and have been meeting outdoors.

A much bigger task than I realised, I am pulling together the responses from group leaders so I can update everyone on what is happening with groups. I had hoped to be able to produce something for this newsletter, but it will take a little while longer. It is very encouraging, though, to see just how many groups are planning resumption of activities in person.

The committee is looking at ways of keeping you informed and adding to our offerings so that we can better meet our charitable objective of "advancing the education of older people in Ludlow and its surrounding locality". [I wish there was a better way of describing us: age is just a number, and I personally don't feel like an 'older people'].

Finally, a thank you to John Curry who joined the committee recently and has 'volunteered' to be newsletter editor. I wish him well in his task, especially having to deal with a pedant like me.

*Dr Robert Hodge*  
Chairman

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u3a in Ludlow is a charity, registered in England and Wales, number 1072055

To contact the editor, please email: [newsletter@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@u3ainludlow.org.uk)

If your email address has changed, please contact: [treasurer@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@u3ainludlow.org.uk)

Following our usual practice, there will be no Monday meetings in July and August.

## Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of u3a in Ludlow will take place on Monday 27 September. We are hoping that we will be able to meet in person, though that is not yet certain, and we have not yet confirmed the venue. If we cannot, the meeting will take place via Zoom. Once they re finalised, full details will be in the September newsletter.

## Monday meetings later in the year

**27 September**

**Bessie Blount, of Kinlet**

**Robert Hodge**

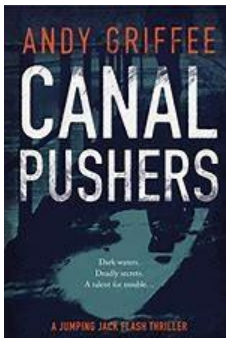


Elizabeth Blount of Kinlet, who had a reputation as a beauty, was sent to court as a maid-of-honour to Catherine of Aragon. She caught the eye of the King and in 1514 or 1515, at the age of 16 became his mistress. The relationship continued for about eight years, and in 1519 she bore him a son, Henry Fitzroy, later Duke of Richmond, who might just have become Henry IX. Bessie Blount later married twice. Who was she and what happened to Henry?

**25 October**

**Canals and Crime Fiction**

**Andy Griffiee**



Canals: idyllic inland waterways or sinister crime settings? To Andy Griffiee they are both.

Former BBC journalist and producer, Andy Griffiee, was inspired to launch into crime writing by the real-life story of Manchester's 'Canal Pusher', the widely reported theory that a spike in deaths by drowning was no accident.

Andy is enthusiastic about his personal love of narrow boating along some of our 2200 miles of canals which also provides him with ample background material for his writing. Andy is not alone in recognising the appeal of canals as settings for contemporary crime fiction and his talk includes reference to other authors writing in this genre together with insights into the Midlands setting, plots and characters of his own novel *Canal Pushers*. The backdrop of author Andy Griffiee's talk is our 2200 miles of canals and how they can be the perfect setting for the crime novel.

**29 November**

**Albania – cut off from the world for 41 years** **John Butterworth**



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.

## On Line Talks

### Ancient Greek myths

Robert Hodge will continue his series of talks on the ancient Greek myths. The third in the series will take place on Wednesday 7 July at 4pm (Jason Medea and the Argonauts), followed by the fourth on 21 July, also at 4pm (The fall of Troy).

To join, click the following link:

<https://zoom.us/j/93508662192?pwd=eC9McjVrRkcxc3BETUNjWmtuZlV5dz09>

or go to [www.zoom.us/join](http://www.zoom.us/join) and enter meeting ID: 935 0866 2192 and passcode: 327034

The talks are being recorded. If you have missed one, or would like to listen again, please contact: [info@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:info@u3ainludlow.org.uk). A 'family tree' of the Greek gods and heroes in the talks is also available, as is a list of the artworks used in the talks.

### Discovering Japan

6 July 1030 – 1200

The first part of the talk, arranged by the Third age Trust and presented by Hilary Jones, will include recent experiences when visiting her family in Kawasaki including Summer festivals and Japanese food. There will also be a personal insight into living and working in Japan, from Daniel Marter, on a **live link from Japan**. Daniel will be discussing the Japanese typical working day and the challenge and benefits of working in a Japanese company. Also looking at the business culture and manners.

Daniel will add aspects of family life, highlighting and contrasting Japanese life with the UK. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/discovering-japan-tickets-158598064079>

### What philosophers say about life and how to live it well

This series of 30-minute talks, arranged by the Third Age Trust, is given by Shri Sharma, u3a Philosophy Subject Adviser, followed by discussion on life experiences with the audience and some questions.

The talks are about the different philosophers' approaches to life and how to live it well. Shri will invite comments and observations about particular philosophies, how these ideas relate to life, or what the audience makes of, and takes out of, the ideas presented.

You're welcome to join some or all of the sessions which are on the following Fridays at 2pm: July 9, 16, 30 and then 6 August.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/what-philosophers-say-about-life-and-how-to-live-it-well-tickets-156074999525>

## Last month's talk

28 June

Dark Light

Carol and Steve Robson

This talk has been recorded. If you missed the talk and would like to watch the recording, please contact: [info@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:info@u3ainludlow.org.uk). The recording will be available until 31 July.

The link mentioned in the talk is: <https://www.foolsgoldacoustic.co.uk/u3a>. The passcode for the page is: FGDLU3A

## Update from the committee

The committee met on 28th June and will meet again on 9th September. John Curry was welcomed to his first meeting.

Grace Wilkins, our Treasurer and Membership Secretary, reported that the online renewal of membership had gone more smoothly than she had expected. She was able to sort out most member's difficulties for them. Downloading and printing the membership renewal form caused some problems and this will need to be reconsidered. The number of members renewing is in line with previous years and Robert Hodge will be emailing those who have still not responded.

Robert Hodge reported that he had made contact with all but one Study Group Coordinator and the Beacon management system is now populated with all the information they provided. Study Group Coordinators will be given Beacon access to the information for their group. About ten study groups have ceased to function during the last sixteen months of restrictions and are not expecting to start up again. Another ten study groups are full which is an ongoing problem for new members wanting to join them.

The editorial subcommittee presented their report which recommended John Curry as the new Editor of Monthly News. This will be sent out on the first of each month as an email with a link to a PDF on the website. The subcommittee will have oversight of the content of the newsletter.

Suzanne Taylor, our Communications and Marketing Coordinator, presented a two-year plan for how u3a in Ludlow can continue to flourish and extend what it offers to our members. This plan generated much creative discussion. In the short-term, members of the committee will meet with groups of Study Group Coordinators over the next couple of months to gauge their thoughts about the future of u3a in Ludlow. It was also agreed to have a lunch for the committee and Study Group Coordinators after the AGM on 27 September.

Finally, the committee approved an Accessibility Policy which provides guidance about how u3a in Ludlow plans events so that consideration is given to all those with any sort of disability. Other policies are also being developed: Safeguarding, Data Protection, Risk Management and Equality & Diversity.

*Barbara Ball*  
Secretary

## The current committee is composed as follows:

Chairman	Dr Robert HODGE (01299 270047)	<a href="mailto:chair@u3ainludlow.org.uk">chair@u3ainludlow.org.uk</a>
Vice Chair	Janice HAINES (01584 878794)	<a href="mailto:janhaines88@gmail.com">janhaines88@gmail.com</a>
Secretary	Barbara BALL (01584 879180)	<a href="mailto:barbara@ludlowballs.forec9.co.uk">barbara@ludlowballs.forec9.co.uk</a>
Treasurer	Grace WILKINS (07990 526203)	<a href="mailto:treasurer@u3ainludlow.org.uk">treasurer@u3ainludlow.org.uk</a>
Study Group Adviser	Robert HODGE (01299 270047)	<a href="mailto:u3a@rjhodge.com">u3a@rjhodge.com</a>
Members' Adviser	Janice HAINES (878794)	<a href="mailto:membersadviser@u3ainludlow.org.uk">membersadviser@u3ainludlow.org.uk</a>
Monthly Meeting		
Organiser	Sue BILLING (07710 756093)	<a href="mailto:sueatmill84@yahoo.com">sueatmill84@yahoo.com</a>
u3A Network	Stuart McLAREN (01584 874622)	<a href="mailto:themclarens@me.com">themclarens@me.com</a>
u3A Plus	Peter LAW (01584 877012)	<a href="mailto:peter.peterwlaw@gmail.com">peter.peterwlaw@gmail.com</a>

Communications and  
marketing  
Newsletter editor

Suzanne TAYLOR (07455 367554)  
John CURRY (01584 877410)

[suzannecaroltaylor@gmail.com](mailto:suzannecaroltaylor@gmail.com)  
[newsletter@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@u3ainludlow.org.uk)

All the members of the committee are Trustees of the registered charity, u3a in Ludlow. A description of each role, along with a description of the role of Trustee, is available on the Committee page on the website.

If you are interested in serving on the Committee, please contact Robert Hodge: [chair@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:chair@u3ainludlow.org.uk).

## Study Group Adviser needed

Since Peony Carpenter has stepped down from this role, we are looking for someone to join the committee and take on the role of Study Group Adviser. The role involves supporting group coordinators with advice and information, encouraging and helping the establishment of new study groups, keeping details of groups up to date and organising the coordinators' annual meeting. If you have some free time and would like to help out on the committee, or for more information, please get in touch with Robert Hodge: [info@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:info@u3ainludlow.org.uk)

## Get to know your committee

### Peter Law – u3a Plus



After obtaining a Physics degree at King's College, London in 1960, I worked in materials science, industrial market research and computing, retiring to Ludlow in 2004 to be near my sister. I joined Ludlow U3A in 2016, have coordinated the Chess group since 2017, and have now just taken over the Music for Pleasure group. I was co-opted to the committee in 2018. My main interests are walking, photography and listening to classical music.

### John Curry – Newsletter editor



With a move to Ludlow in 1986, I started a one-man architect's practice after 12 years in large municipal offices in Manchester. Twin sons Oli & Alex joined Karen and I in 1989, and life in Ludlow has been a joy ever since, with working stints with private practices in Hereford and Worcester. In 2008 I retrained in adult education, spending 3 years teaching Maths, to my own great surprise, at Featherstone Gaol, a Category 3 prison men's near Wolverhampton.

An interest in Italian was sparked by a trip Karen and I made around north Italy in May 1986. I have been splashing around in the subject ever since. I have sampled a range of topics in u3a, but Italian has proved a solid interest. Maps, libraries, museums, galleries, art and design, science writing and humour are all fascinations.

I am the newest member of the Committee but I hope not the newest for long. As newsletter editor, I am hungry for your input.

## ■ Spotlight on the Writers' group

### Our overnight visitor

The other night, as I walked from the house to the barn where I have my study, I heard a fluttering at ground level near my husband's study door. Was it a bird? They nest in the bush nearby, but this was too low down. Was it a mouse? I hoped not – I'm not keen on them sharing the contents of our kitchen store cupboard. I



had gone to close my computer down and shut up for the night after several hours' work, and so it was only a few minutes later that I came back. Yes, it was definitely fluttering, and was clearly a bird in some distress. My torch illuminated the red breast of a startled Robin, its head at an unnatural angle. Capturing it in my warm hand, it soon settled, its little heart gradually slowing, but beating steadily. Long slender legs relaxed between my fingers, it gazed up at me, fear gone. Was this the friendly Robin who regaled us with its beautiful song early in the morning, reminding us to put food out. Was it the Robin who sometimes followed my husband into the kitchen, or who took seed from my hand? Was it the Robin who presented us with a clutch of chicks earlier in the year? Or was it one of those chicks, not yet mature enough to differentiate between the reflections in the window and the real world. Had it, as I thought, flown into the window and become stunned? What did it think about this sudden assault out of the blue? And did it recognise us and trust us?

It was too dark and too cold to leave it outside to fend for itself. We had to offer it shelter.

A box was found, a little bowl of water and some bird seed, some fabric to lie on. It panicked a little as I laid it in the box but settled as we covered it. We hoped it would survive the night and realise that we were no threat – we were safety. And love.

It did survive, and as I lifted it from its shelter in the morning, I felt a little saddened that I would have to set it free, and a little fearful that it would be unable to fly. As I opened my hand, it took a few faltering flaps and fell to the ground, then with a surge of willpower and memory, it rose, and flew away, its song surely celebrating another new day. And that's how I see life during these difficult times. We have been stunned by the sudden assault out of the blue. And we have needed helping hands to come to our rescue, to shelter us, to keep us warm and safe. Like that little bird, we have to trust and accept that restrictions on our liberty are necessary for us to survive the dark night that is Covid. And believe that we will fly again. In the summer, our garden will once again play host to a new clutch of Robins. I hope he – or she – will remember our little act of kindness one night in November 2020 and tell their chicks of the night we came to their rescue.

*Ann Kelsey*

## **Magic at the Blue Boar**

My dog Magic loves this pub  
The barmaid's crushed biscuits - the Regulars' hugs  
The Snug's open fire and crackling logs

She settles contented - so pleased to be here  
As I read the paper - drink coffee or beer

But there is one place here she doesn't adore  
That's into the bar past the Beer Cellar door.

Her perky tail droops as she cowers white-eyed  
Her body pressed low - 'gainst the far wall she slides

What is it that spooks her - what does she see?  
What makes her so frightened to come through with me?

She's frightened of feathers so perhaps some are near  
From the beer-drinking Jackdaw that used to live here

Or maybe the ghost of a dead cavalier  
Or some drunken landlord drowned in his own beer

Or a barmaid who slipped on some left-over dregs  
When doing her duty and changing the kegs?

Whatever it is it's decidedly queer -  
Now Magic stays put when I go for my beer!

*Marilyn Gaunt*

## The lump under the bedclothes

Slowly, surely, quietly they crawled, scarcely daring to breathe in case they were heard. The gentle rhythmic sound of breathing above, broken occasionally by grunts and loud exhalation of the other's breath was reassuring - they were asleep. Using exaggerated hand & arm gestures, the older one of the two indicated for her partner in crime to crawl under the bed on the nearest side, while she continued her journey round the end to the far side, guided by the light coming through the chink in the curtains. Encountering a pair of slippers, it was all she could do not to cry out, and she momentarily paused, checking that she had not been heard. Reassured, she continued, entering the dark cavern beneath, & joined her accomplice, just in time as movement above signified that they were beginning to wake. "Joe, Joe" the woman's voice urged her husband to wake. "What is it Peg? What's the matter?" he grumpily asked. "I'm sure I heard a noise" she said. "Don't be silly" he replied, "it's only the cat. Now go back to sleep". Loud snoring drowned out the muffled giggles from below. "Joe, Joe." "What is it now?" "We haven't got a cat. Oooh - something moved. There's a lump under the bedclothes". There was indeed a lump appearing and disappearing in the middle of the mattress, accompanied by giggles that were no longer muffled. "Perhaps it's a mouse" she exclaimed, with a distinctive tremble in her voice. "Don't worry, I'll save you. Let me just reach my slipper and I'll squash it." At that, two little faces appeared either side of the bed, no longer able to contain themselves. "It was us" they chimed together.

Seventy odd years later, this grandmother can still remember the occasion, and rues the day when divan beds replaced those old horse-hair mattresses on wire mesh frames. Being startled by grandchildren hiding behind the curtains isn't quite the same.

*Ann Kelsey*



## Respite

Unearthly dread spreads from afar -

people "lock-down" (are suddenly prey)  
disease overwhelms  
humans lie prone in hospital beds machines  
help them breathe Covid kills

weeks pass roads quieten shops close;  
And then – an unfolding:  
butterflies spread multi-hued wings  
freckled foxgloves bloom, full-blown  
clusters of primrose blossom verges, tentative  
in this vernal dawn;  
forget-me-nots burgeon in nook and cranny  
grasses grow high and, in the wink of an eye  
are buttercup fields layering our land;

lupins burst and steeple skywards -  
teeming, lavish, lush,

Queen Ann's lace overflows hedgerows  
and meets, and touches where tractors came;

trees stretch and yawn  
spread languorous branches with vigorous  
fronds their city suits of grime and grit  
sloughed off,  
birds pronounce choruses of  
silver-tongued, sacred symphonies ...

Peace  
Hush

no sound but the deep sigh of  
earth  
and in that sigh, a rising sap of

hopefulness (held cautiously)  
for healing ...

a binding of wounds for fish and fowl  
a baptism to cleanse polluted waters  
a promise to never wound animals  
cease plundering rain forests ...

a rising sap of hopefulness for healing -  
please -

Leave them a flower...

*Helen Barratt*

*Lovely, rich and diverse writing from the Writers' Group. Photographers, artists and illustrators take note...  
Ed*

## Walking with a Purpose Study Group



*'Banana' break in Airton. Photo taken by Chris Coles*

This year's late May bank holiday saw 17 group members and friends battling through the traffic to get to the HF Holiday Centre at Newfield Hall, near Skipton, for three days guided walking in the Southern Yorkshire Dales. The timing of the holiday wasn't ideal, but after last year's disappointment when our annual walking holiday had to be cancelled due to Covid, we were all thrilled to be together again and to welcome some new members to the holiday.

Newfield Hall is a beautifully renovated Victorian 'pile' with walks in the dales literally available on the doorstep. Those of us who so chose, spent each day walking through the undulating countryside led by very able HF guides, all volunteers. Others chose to explore the area independently, while some stayed at the house to enjoy the beautiful scenery and the house amenities, which included an indoor swimming pool.

We met together in the evenings to recount our day's experiences and to enjoy an excellent dinner, (at appropriately spaced tables of course). Covid restrictions meant that some of the features of the holidays that we had experienced in previous years were missing, but everyone seemed to have had a good time. Our thanks to Ian and Lesley Crosskell, the group co-ordinators, who undertook all the booking arrangements with HF Holidays on behalf of the group (no small task). We look forward to next year's holiday and another opportunity to explore more of Britain with friends old and new.

*Jan Haines*

## Music for Pleasure

The Music for Pleasure group is seeking new members. If you are interested please get in touch.

Contact : Peter Law

email: [peter.peterwlaw@gmail.com](mailto:peter.peterwlaw@gmail.com)

## Latin for Beginners



A new group started up last year for those interested in learning Latin, but only managed one meeting before lockdown kicked in. Robert Hodge is hoping to start up the group again. Those who are completely new to Latin and those who have a little knowledge from schooldays are welcome. Sessions will be held fortnightly on Mondays, Thursdays or Fridays (depending on which day is most convenient for members). The group will use a combination of a Latin primer (which members will have to buy) and material that Robert will provide. Grammar will rear its ugly head, but the group will focus on translation and reading Latin texts. To help keep everything in context there will be discussion about the Ancient World, classical Latin authors and occasional visits to read inscriptions and get a taste of life in Roman Britain.

Contact : Robert Hodge

email: [u3a@rjhodge.com](mailto:u3a@rjhodge.com)

tel: 01299 270047

## Philosophy and ethics



The Philosophy and Ethics group is looking for new members. Currently, the group studies individual philosophers by reading chosen books, interspersed with questions of ethics, but is open to members' ideas. The group is planning to resume face-to-face meetings in September in members' homes, though might use video from time to time. Willing members might be asked to give occasional presentations and thought is being given to talks by visiting lecturers.

## New u3a Italian Group: "Gli Esploratori"



Volcanos or Veronese? Thinking of Italian, for Holidays, Art, Literature, Music, eology, Politics, Food, History, *la Bella Figura*, *la Dolce Vita*?

We are putting together a new group to develop skill at any level. All levels welcome. Join the initial discussion and let your *entusiasmo* flourish.

Contact : John Curry

email: [jc7880624@gmail.com](mailto:jc7880624@gmail.com)

tel: 01584 877410

## Chess for beginners and developing players



This friendly group meets at 2.30 pm on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month to improve their chess skills and enjoy good company and is looking for new members.

Chess sets and good refreshments are provided! If you would like to try it out, please get in touch.

Contact : Peter Law

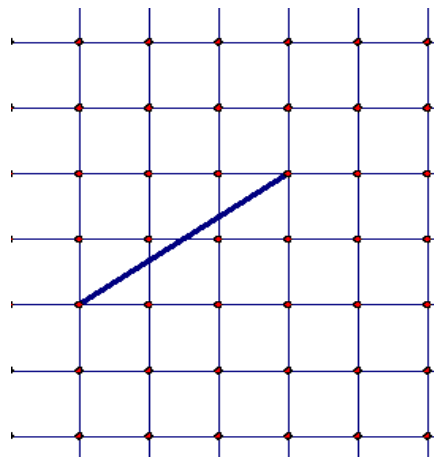
email: [peter.peterwlaw@gmail.com](mailto:peter.peterwlaw@gmail.com)

## Calling all maths explorers

The u3a Exploring Mathematics group will be starting up again live on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September. You are very welcome to come and join us. The group meets once a month at my home in Ludlow, on a Monday afternoon, either on the first or the second Monday. To give you an idea of the mathematics we explore here is something we did recently:

How many different isosceles triangles can you find with this as one of the sides and with the third vertex at a grid point?

Find the areas of these triangles. Can you find a connection between the numbers for these areas?



Contact: Derek Ball

email: [derek@ludlowballs.force9.co.uk](mailto:derek@ludlowballs.force9.co.uk)

tel: 01584 879180

If you have any useful links that would help advance the education of other members, please get in touch: [info@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:info@u3ainludlow.org.uk)

## ■ Did you know? – we have a website!

[www.u3ainludlow.org.uk](http://www.u3ainludlow.org.uk)

The website has details of monthly talks, including times and joining details. There is a page with details of the committee, full details of groups and an archive of monthly newsletters, along with a wealth of other interesting and useful information. If you would like to see something added, please get in touch: [info@u3ainludlow.org.uk](mailto:info@u3ainludlow.org.uk)

## ■ What's a MOOC?

A MOOC is a 'massive open online course'. MOOCs are free and many are run by leading organizations, including top universities around the world. A MOOC is an opportunity to undertake a short course of study in a topic that interests you. There is no one central repository, though [www.mooc.org](http://www.mooc.org) is a good start. Try a web search for 'mooc uk' to find more – many UK universities offer MOOCs.

## ■ TED talks

Not interested in a course of study but would like to listen to a short talk, sometimes by a world-renowned authority on a favourite subject? TED talks could be the answer. These are free, online talks – usually in video form – lasting from a few minutes anywhere to an hour or so. Go [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com) for more information.

## ■ The Open University - OpenLearn

The Open University offers nearly 1000 free courses, from introductory to advanced level, in eight different topic areas: Health, Sports and Psychology; Education and Development; History and the Arts; Languages; Money and Business; Nature and Environment; Science, Maths and Technology; and Society, Politics and Law. For more information and to sign up, go to <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses>.

## ■ FutureLearn

Future learn offers hundreds of free courses lasting typically from six to eight weeks ([www.futurelearn.com](http://www.futurelearn.com)).

## ■ u3a Learning Events

National Office continues to put together a programme of online talks. For information and to book, go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>