

■ **A message from the Chairman**

Last November, the committee announced that we would extend the 2020 membership until 30 June 2021 (though this was actually published as 31 July, a mistake for which we apologise). We then later announced that membership renewal would be at the reduced rate of £6 for the remainder of the year, covering the period 1 July – 31 December. Some members, who pay by standing order, have already renewed their membership at the old rate and have allowed u3a in Ludlow to retain the additional £6 they have paid as a donation, for which we are very grateful.

You will shortly receive an email inviting you to renew your membership. Now that we have moved on to the Beacon administration system, you will be able to renew online if you wish and full details will be in the email.

I do hope that you will renew and remain a member of u3a in Ludlow. This last year has been difficult, but the rules now allow groups of up to six to meet indoors and it is to be hoped a further relaxation of restrictions will be announced later this month. I hope that we will see a gradual move towards groups meeting up again in person and enjoying the social aspects of human contact – one of the additional benefits of u3a membership.

Many groups have continued to meet online or keep in contact via email during the last year. u3a in Ludlow had over 70 active groups and I hope that they all pick up the pieces and resume their contribution to 'learn, laugh and live'. I shall be in touch with all the group coordinators shortly to get an update on group plans and details will be published on the website.

Now that May is out of the way, the chance of snow should be somewhat reduced, though rumours of summer's approach may be premature. Still, although my thrice-postponed trip to Russia in October still looks doubtful, I am looking forward to being able to explore previously unvisited parts of the UK. But, after being in isolation for the last 435 days, how am I going to be able to deal with ... people?

Dr Robert Hodge
Chairman

■ **Newsletter editor**

We are sorry to say that Derek Ball who, since the beginning of 2017, has produced the monthly and bi-annual newsletters, is stepping down from his role as newsletter editor. Derek has been a stalwart supporter of u3a in Ludlow and the committee wishes to express its grateful thanks to Derek. We wish him well, and express our appreciation for the contribution he has made to the success of u3a in Ludlow.

A new editor will take over shortly, but in the meantime, newsletters will continue to be published.

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

To contact the editor, please email: newsletter@u3ainludlow.org.uk

If your email address has changed, please contact: treasurer@u3ainludlow.org.uk

■ Monday Meeting – 28 June at 11am via Zoom

Dark Light

Carol and Steve Robson

In 1900 a strange event occurred on a remote island in the Outer Hebrides. Dark Light: The Flannen



Island Mystery, unsolved to this day, explores the story of the mysterious disappearance of three lighthouse men. But this is no ordinary storytelling. This musical presentation from Fool's Gold, (musicians and storytellers Carol and Steve Robson), tells the tale of Flannen Island in detail, using original and contemporary songs and through fascinating visuals.

Zoom presentations

To join the meeting click:

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

Alternatively, go to www.zoom.us/join (or use the Zoom app to join) and enter Meeting ID: 935 0866 2192 Passcode: 327034

If you are unable to use Zoom, you can listen in by telephone. Call one of the following numbers and enter the meeting ID and passcode above.

0330 088 5830

0131 460 1196

020 3481 5237

020 3481 5240

020 3901 7895

■ Dad's Army – the Nation's Favourite Comedy

If you missed Charles Garland's talk on 24 May, a recording is available. For the link, please contact: info@u3ainludlow.org.uk

■ Monday meetings later in the year

27 September

Annual General Meeting

followed by Bessie Blount, of Kinlet

Robert Hodge

Bessie was the teenage mistress of Henry VIII and mother of his son Henry. Who was she and what happened to their son? Dr Robert Hodge will reveal all.

25 October

Canals and Crime Fiction

Andy Griffiee

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.

■ 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 9 June at 4pm, followed by the fourth on 23 June, also at 4pm.

The ancient Greek myths, as told by Hesiod and Homer amongst others, have inspired countless works of art over the span of 2,500 years or more. One of the joys of wandering an art gallery is realizing that, without looking at the plaque, you can tell what a painting is about from your knowledge of the myths. But what is the enduring power of these tales?

Beautifully illustrated with works of art, the talks will explore the interwoven myths from the creation to the time of heroes. There will be eight talks in all, fortnightly on Wednesdays from 4pm, lasting no more than one and a half hours, including time for questions.

To join, click the following link:

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

or go to 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. 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.

■ Monday talks in future years

We receive many offers of talks but recommendations from our own members are always welcome too. If you know of a speaker, or you yourself are a speaker who can offer a topic which you think may be of interest to our members, please contact Sue Billing at sueatmill84@yahoo.com

■ Talks at Betjeman Lodge

Betjeman Lodge is a complex of retirement apartments in Lower Corve Street, Ludlow. We have been asked if any of our members would be willing to give talks, possibly for a fee, to the residents. Here is an opportunity to help pass on your knowledge and perhaps entertain in the process, whilst advancing the education of older people in Ludlow, which is our charitable purpose. If you would be willing to give a talk, please get in touch: info@u3ainludlow.org.uk

■ Update from the committee

If you are reading this then you have already discovered one of the changes to the way in which the committee communicates with you. In future, as this month, you will receive an email with a link to our website to access Monthly News.

Other changes will happen over the next few weeks as the Committee continues to develop its use of the Beacon management system.

The Treasurer will be contacting you soon about how you will be able to pay your £6 subscription to Ludlow u3a for 2021. The Chairman has also recently contacted all study group coordinators to find out the current and future arrangements for their study group meetings. This information will be put on Beacon and members will be able to access this.

At the recent meeting of the committee some time was spent discussing the way forward for Monthly News after the resignation of Derek Ball who has been its editor for over four years. A sub-committee has been set up to do this and if you have any thoughts about what you would like from Monthly News please contact a member of the committee as soon as possible.

Currently the committee is meeting once a month because of the changes they want to implement and planning for the possibility of face-to face meetings being allowed in the next month or so.

At the recent committee meeting Suzanne Taylor, our Communications & Marketing Coordinator presented the results of her pilot survey of members' views about what they wanted from u3a in Ludlow. She had spoken to about twenty members and as a result of this pilot the committee is planning what to do next. Watch this space!

John Curry has been co-opted on to the committee and he will attend his first meeting in June.

At committee meetings, reports are regularly received about the current financial situation, membership and new members, study groups, monthly meetings, communication & marketing, the website, Monthly news, U3A Plus and the Shropshire U3A Network.

The next meeting of the committee is on Monday 28 June. If you have any questions or issues you would like raised please contact the Secretary on secretary@u3ainludlow.org.uk.

Barbara Ball

Secretary

■ The current committee is composed as follows:

Chairman – Dr Robert HODGE (01299 270047 – chair@u3ainludlow.org.uk)

Vice Chair – Janice HAINES (01584 878794 – janhaines88@gmail.com)

Secretary – Barbara BALL (01584 879180 – barbara@ludlowballs.forec9.co.uk)

Treasurer – Grace WILKINS (07990 526203 – treasurer@u3ainludlow.org.uk)
Study Group Adviser – (pro tem) Robert HODGE (01299 270047 – u3a@rjhodge.com)
Members’ Adviser – Janice HAINES (01584 878794 – membersadviser@u3ainludlow.org.uk)
Monthly Meeting Organiser – Sue BILLING (07710 756093 – sueatmill84@yahoo.com)
u3A Network – Stuart McLAREN (01584 874622 – themclarens@me.com)
u3A Plus – Peter LAW (01584 877012 – peter.peterwlaw@gmail.com)
Communications and marketing – Suzanne TAYLOR (07455 367554 - suzannecaroltaylor@gmail.com)
Committee member – John CURRY (01584 877410 – jc7880624@gmail.com)

John Curry was co-opted onto the committee at the committee meeting on 24 May.

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.

■ 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

■ Get to know your committee

Suzanne Taylor – Communications and marketing

Hello - I am Suzanne Taylor and have been a member of u3a in Ludlow since last year, following my



retirement and partial move to Ludlow. I worked for over thirty years in a series of international commercial roles within the automotive industry, which enabled me to work abroad on secondment on several occasions - most recently China for 5 years and Germany for three. My first degree was in German, Spanish and Economics and I also have a Masters in Business Administration. I live with my partner of forty years spending (under non-Covid conditions) one third of our time in Ludlow, one third abroad travelling and one third in Walsall. We have both joined a number of study groups and are looking forward to them starting up soon. I enjoy walking, swimming, good wine and golf. I am looking

forward to working as part of the committee on matters relating to communication and marketing and am excited to meet you all soon at a Monday morning meeting at the Assembly Rooms.

Stuart McLaren – u3a Network

I'm Stuart McLaren. I've have been a member of u3a in Ludlow for the past seven years, two as Chair. I coordinate two Interest Groups: Cafe Society and the Middle East Study Group. My background is mainly a story of keeping moving. After school in the Scottish Highlands, I was a Radio Officer in the Merchant Navy until I decided it was time to do something more grown up so I joined the Communications Division of the Foreign Office. It shortly after became even more grown up in the mainstream of the Diplomatic Service. My wife Glenys and I spent a good part of our time in South East Asia, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur and Kuching. We also managed South Africa and the Republic of Georgia. Having retired to Shropshire, two years ago we took the well-worn path to Ludlow from a small village less than ten miles away. A successful move now requiring only one car which is no longer needed to fetch milk or newspapers!



■ The Nine Muses and their Mum

Musing on screen about the pitfalls of writing my personal history (u3a in Ludlow Newsletter May 2021), I thought to check the name of the Muse of history. You will of course have known from childhood that her name is Clio. It was tempting to make a reference to her in the text, as I realised that her gracious presence would instantly raise the tone of the piece. Alas, by the time the idea struck me, the time for tone-raising had passed, and the text had passed into a wider, wiser world. Information spreads so quickly nowadays, and fresh ideas do not strike quickly enough.



Dance of Apollo and the Muses, Baldassare Peruzzi (1481-1536)

So, for my own learning exercise, and to share the knowledge with poor unfortunates like myself who never knew, or had forgotten, here are the nine Muses and their spheres of influence:

Calliope	- epic poetry	Polyhymnia	- sacred song
Clio	- history	Terpsichore	- dance
Erato	- lyric and love poetry	Thalia	- comedy
Euterpe	- flutes and lyric poetry	Urania	- astronomy
Melpomene	- tragedy		

This list of nine comes from *Theogony*, by the ancient Greek poet, Hesiod, though my source was *A Classical Education* by Caroline Taggart. However, the story is more than a little misty. The number of the Muses varies from three to nine, and their names vary too. For anyone with a Christian education, (proper Council of Trent Christian that is), from which the myths, poetry and symbolism of classical belief had been expunged, this list of names is invaluable. Especially to a big pseud like me. Caroline Taggart's book is also a mine of other information about things classical from the ancient world, bestriding the peaks of Parnassus and Olympus at heights quite beyond the reach of my oxygen tank.

Mother of the team was Mnemosyne, (a bit of a mouthful: try *Mnemonic* as a mnemonic). She was a daughter of Uranus and Gaia, and goddess of memory. The Muses' papa was of course Zeus, as he was of many others. Many of the Muses had a close encounter of the personal kind with Apollo, their leader and guru: encounters that might well be frowned upon these days. They are all portrayed as lively,

young and amenable, often the case with Apollo. Best not bring up the fact that he was also a son of Zeus, so their half-brother.

The girls' names have great potential: all weighty with cultural baggage, and at the same time risible. The sound of them certainly lights up synapses for me miles from culture central. By reciting their names I get glimpses of horticulture (Thalia / daffodils), correcting fluid (Erato), gynaecology (most of them actually). PG Wodehouse had a lot of fun with them. Daughters of Terpsichore turned up at Blandings Castle from time to time to plague the tranquillity of his young gentlemen. Terpsichore was a real and present danger to the tranquil life of Aunt Agatha.

They do seem to be a fairly friendly lot. They were inclined to encourage and inspire, not like the Fates, the Furies, the Gorgons, the Harpies and the Sirens, and instead put a positive spin on femininity. They cover a wide territory, so wide that gaps appear between their areas of special interest. What would Thalia have to say to Urania, for example? Once Thalia has made fun of Urania's name, which is a bit of a cheap shot, even for the Muse of comedy, her sister's astronomy interest seems to be short on comic potential. But if Urania is not fast asleep, she could shift the topic to the name of their shared grandfather, Uranus. Now, he really *is* full of comic potential. That is what you need a muse for - she supplies that elusive element that transmogrifies the humdrum.

What they "were about", in modern parlance, was and is art. All are preoccupied with narrative and performance art, except astronomy, and by stretching coherence only a little, astronomy can easily find a place: The visible universe remains by a margin The Greatest Show of All. In ancient times, astronomy had a role too in magical thinking and speculation, the Star of Bethlehem I suppose one of Urania's top performers. Painting, sculpture, architecture, on the other hand, don't get a look in on the Muses' list of interests. Maybe, like Michael Gove, the Greeks thought these were best reserved as hobbies and extra-curricular entertainment for the less able?

I can see that in the throes of performance there is great comfort to be had from the knowledge that a supporting figure stands at your shoulder who really understands what you are doing, and what is at stake. Sometimes great performers get a sense that their performance is being watched. The pianist Steven Kovacevich said he felt Mozart and Beethoven to be nearby at times of intense performance. In my rare ventures into the gaze of others, the Muses have kept their distance, and I have had to rely for a supporting figure on the wise guidance of my Guardian Angel. But HeShe tends to remember other pressing concerns just when I need it, and obsesses to the point of tedium about my immortal soul. And, to be fair, there is only one of him/her. I think, with my narrative and performance skills, a backing choir of nine seems like a sensible minimum.

Over the years, each of the Nine has had additional cares allotted to them, but these appear to be stuck-on qualities, unlikely new preoccupations. Thalia for agriculture? Surely some mistake...? From looking at the basic list, duties seem to be rather unevenly spread: Clio and Urania both seem to have quite a loaded programme, while poetry gets the support of at least three, and some kind attention from Polyhymnia, with her sacred songs.

In Ireland, where narrative and poetry are very much alive, the belief holds that when you talk of ghosts, or figures from the past, they crowd around in delight. Guardian angels, spirit guides, ancestors, the dear departed, they like a good story just like us. The Muses gather round too and the myth takes wing. So, strangely, while writing this, ten obscure names has come to signify much more. Perhaps the Muses are longing for affection too. Look for them in a *museum*, in *music*, in *amusements*. In libraries too. I think definitely in *libraries*. The great library of Alexandria here was part of a complex known as the Mouseion dedicated to the Muses.

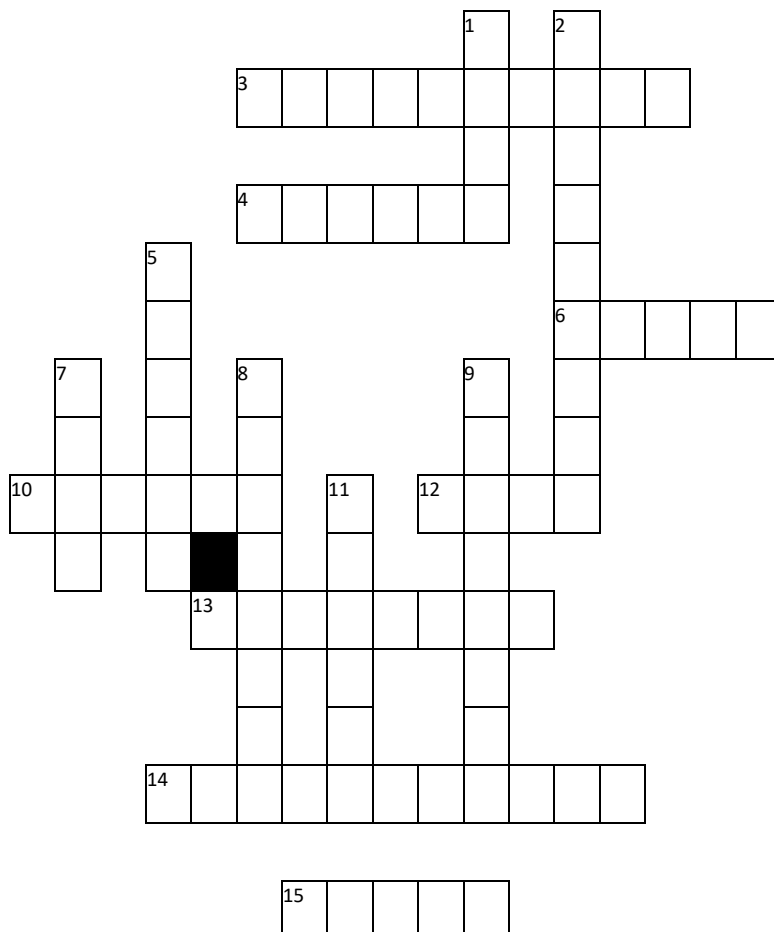
If you were an Olympian muse, which muse would you be? I think I want to identify with their mother, Mnemosyne: that way I can belong to them all, and they can belong to me. Memory is indeed the mother of what-is-to-come. Maybe Calliope and her fellows can carry some of the weight. It would be a tragedy if they weren't there at all ... a tragic absence of tragedy. So Melpomene is with us even when she isn't. I think her emblem should be that cat-in-a-box that is alive and simultaneously dead. As we think of them, they gather.

The Muses are a lovely subject for solitary contemplation, but I think they would thrive in company. Maybe they just need a friendly society to promote their interests. And some mortal to advertise some vacancies, and promote an enlarged cohort.

John Curry

■ Ancient Greek myths – crossword puzzle

If you have been following the talks, try your hand at this and see how much you remember.



Across

- 3. God of blacksmiths and fire
- 4. Messenger for the Gods and God of travel
- 6. Everything he touched turned gold
- 10. The king of the gods father
- 12. God of war and fighting
- 13. Half man and Half bull
- 14. A box full of everything bad
- 15. Tricked into ruling the underworld

Down

- 1. God of the sky
- 2. Home of the Gods
- 5. Goddess of wisdom
- 7. Goddess of Marriage, Mothers and Families
- 8. God of the sea
- 9. Performed 12 labours
- 11. God of archery, music, poetry, prophecy, and medicine

Robert Hodge

For further information on any of these groups, please use the email address given or contact:

info@u3ainluldow.org.uk

■ **New u3a group : Creative Piano**

Whether you are new to the instrument, played as a child and want to return, or have maintained practice throughout your life, you will be very welcome to join a piano group, which will take place at St Laurence's Church. David Gaukroger, has a lifetime's experience of teaching at all levels and has found group learning to be by far the most productive and enjoyable environment in which to make progress.

The current method of learning an instrument in the classical tradition is counterproductive. Teaching methods begun at the end of the eighteenth century have been perpetuated to this day, even though they fly in the face of modern understanding of how learning best takes place. In particular, there is an almost total reliance on teaching the repertoire rather than exploring the structure and grammar of music. No other musical culture operates in this way.

Lively discussion and mutual support will be the cornerstones of the group which will meet on Tuesdays or Thursdays (to be decided) fortnightly in St Laurence's church.

■ **Music for Pleasure**

The Music for Pleasure group is seeking new members. If you are interested contact Geoff Neden:

gneden@googlemail.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, as are those who can happily translate 'et sedit super tapete cattus'. 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.

■ **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.

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

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

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

■ **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 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 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).

■ **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>