



# ACTIVE RETIREMENT NEWSLETTER November 2020

STREET & GLASTONBURY



Learn! Laugh! Live!

National website: [www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk) Locally: [Streetu3a.org](http://Streetu3a.org)

## THE EDITOR'S SAY

This NL is a month later than usual for reasons you may work out for yourself. Where we thought, a few months ago, that NO classes would be able to run this autumn term, some few have in fact been able to take place. Some have run online in one way or another (Zoom, live streaming etc) and we have reports on how the term has gone. Has it worked as they thought it would? Have there been any particular problems? If so, how were they solved? (or not, as the case may be.) Remember my new motto: *It's Better Than Nothing*. NB You should have with this NL a copy of the Nomination form for the election of committee members next April: printed for the printed NL; online for the online issue. We are sending it to you now because, if the next NL is later than usual, there may not be time between the NL and the (possible) AGM for you to submit it. If you lose it, you can download another one from the website.

The Committee wishes you all a Merry Christmas and a New Year less stressful than this one has been!

Pat

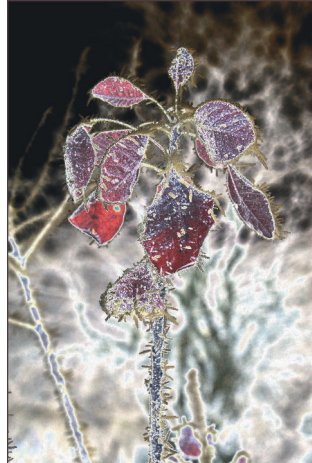
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## Chairman's Winter Report 2020

I was hoping to be able to tell you that everything was improving but unfortunately it is going the other way. Let us look on the bright side and hope everything will improve and we will be able to have a good Christmas. I hope all of you that have been using Zoom and other websites are enjoying using them. Finally, I would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and hopefully a Happy New Year

MIKE ELLINGTON



## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Hello, all members. Despite the difficulties we have faced this year leading to a restricted programme we have had an encouraging number of members renewing their membership. We currently have 309 members, eight of which are new members. Some of you have used the new online enrolment form. This appears to have worked well and we will be using this system next year. If you still prefer the postal system and writing cheques this will also be possible. Please let me know if you change your home address or email address as we do not want you to miss out on any U3A information. Also, make sure to add my email address to your email address book. This will help avoid any emails we send you being filtered out as SPAM. The email address I use to inform members is: [sandg.members@gmail.com](mailto:sandg.members@gmail.com) AND also: [members@streetu3a.org](mailto:members@streetu3a.org). If you have any query relating to your membership, please don't hesitate to contact me by email or by phone on 01458 447975.

PAUL VERNOUN

**Deadline for the next edition:  
20 February**



lottery funded



## FROM THE GROUPS

As we know, there has been limited activity for groups. Several have carried on via Zoom including British History, French, Music Jamming, Music Appreciation, Ukelele, Film Group and Reading Greek Tragedy. Line Dancing has taken place via the internet. All the information on these groups can be found on our website. Latin has taken place in the Baltonsborough Church Hall but has now ended until January at the earliest.

We have been informed by the Red Cross that they have a website; [www.redcross.org.uk/loneliness-resources](http://www.redcross.org.uk/loneliness-resources) should anyone be feeling isolated or lonely. The sessions are free and cater for adults 19+. You can email [RedCrossEducation@redcross.org.uk](mailto:RedCrossEducation@redcross.org.uk) or call 03444122734.

CYNTHIA RAYES



## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

These are the SAME FOUR as were in the July Newsletter. I realize that times are difficult but we do need the following personnel a.s.a.p. I expect most of you can work out what the Treasurer does but some of the other vacancies are less easy to define: Secretary, Venues Manager and Chairman. We don't just sit round a table every two months drinking tea and chatting. It does take a little work to keep the U3A flying. We need, before the next AGM, or April, whichever comes first, the following personnel:

**URGENTLY REQUIRED NOW:** Venues Manager who basically books the venues used by our Groups. The Venues Manager may sound as if it is not the most vital job on the committee but it is just as vital as any other. Some U3A's do not have a Venues-person and without one, Group Leaders have to find and book their own venues, (including cancellations and re-arranges etc etc) and deal with invoices, payment, and any other problems which may crop up. All this is done for you in the S&G and if we do not find another Venues Manager, you will have to do the work yourselves.

We also need a Secretary, whose main job is to take the minutes and keep records of our decisions and actions.

**ESSENTIAL:** We have to have a CHAIRMAN; without one, we are not permitted to function as a U3A. Our Chairman chairs the committee meetings and represents us as a whole. And we have to have a TREASURER: again, without one we are not allowed to function as a U3A. (See the DANGER!! paragraph)

## DANGER!! CLEAR AND PRESENT AND LOOMING

I have to alert you to a possible DANGER which lies ahead if we do not do something about it SOON. We are obliged to elect three Officers of our U3A. These are: the Chairman, the Secretary and the Treasurer. And the greatest of these, and the most vital, is the Treasurer. Under the regulations of the Charities Commission, if we do not have a Treasurer, we cannot function as a U3A. We shall have to close down. Shut up shop. Cease educating and enjoying ourselves. Stay at home and mope. We MUST have a Treasurer by the next AGM or we shall have to dissolve ourselves. The deadline for this dire event is 31st August 2021. If we have not found a Treasurer by then we shall Cease To Exist.

This is your gentle, five-minute warning to give you time to consider whether you might be able to help us avoid this terrible fate. It's a lot easier to keep going than to re-start a U3A, believe me. If nobody feels able to put a tiny toe into the water of U3A-admin, the next Newsletter will have BOLD HEADLINES with all sorts of dreadful consequences which await us if we do not find a Treasurer. You can see why they make such a fuss. The Treasurer is Keeper of the Purse Strings; you can't have just any old bod in the position. We need someone who is trustworthy and a bit computer-savvy. Andy will take you through all the routines and ways-of-doing things. You'll Never Walk Alone – not to start with. Andy will guide you and show you the ropes. He has set up a system which is efficient yet flexible and we have amassed a reasonable cushion of assets which has helped to tide us over this exceptional year and will help us survive into the New Age which will follow C-19. So please have a think about whether you could possibly consider taking on this (literally) vital task and contact either Andy or the Chairman or any member of the committee. This can be done by using email addresses on the last page of the Newsletter, or by consulting the website

## COFFEE MORNINGS via Zoom.

We have also had a suggestion that we could resume our Coffee Mornings on Zoom. We are considering arranging a talk in January, February and March, using the resources we have at hand. (That means possibly using Speakers from among our own ranks.)

### ZOOM QUIZ

**(You'd get a few thousand points in Scrabble if you got THAT on a triple word score.)**

For obvious reasons there will be no Christmas party this year. Instead, Andy Pickford has volunteered to lead a Zoom-Quiz for us. Don't panic. It is painless. All you have to do is go to our website (StreetU3A) and then CLICK ON THE LONG CODE Andy has set up for you. The QUIZ will be held on FRIDAY, 11th DECEMBER 2020 starting at 2.00pm but you can log on from 1.45. See the codes set out below if you fancy typing them out. But you should also have had notification by email from our Members' Secretary with details of the codes. Click on the long code set out in the email (it should look exactly like the long one printed here), then click to say you want to join the meeting and you should be away. IF IT DOESN'T WORK THE FIRST TIME, come out, pause for ten seconds, and try again. You know what these machines are like.

If you don't 'do' the Internet, it probably will not be possible to do the Quiz either UNLESS by then we are allowed to 'bubble' again and you can find another S&G member to go online with and do the quiz that way. But please don't break the Law or commonsense. These are the codes for accessing the Zoom-Quiz:

**Topic: U3A Quiz**

**Time: Friday Dec 11, 2020 02:00pm**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9330848257?pwd=dTd1S3U2dmFvM3ZsNnVhbFJRRUxLdz09>**

**Meeting ID: 933 084 8257**

**Passcode: u3a**

PS For those who can't make the Friday afternoon session, the SAME Quiz will be put onto our website from 4.00pm on 11th with the answers posted on Sunday, 13th December. Be lucky!

## IGNORANCE AT THE (VERY) TOP

PSNB If I had my way, this item would have been at the front, on the top and in screaming headlines. TAT (those initials become more appropriate as every day goes by) have spent (hold your breath) SIXTEEN THOUSAND POUNDS of *our money* on changing the logo. They changed the what-is-called-a-strapline earlier to *Learn! Laugh! Live!* WITH exclamation marks (at the time). See the cover of the July NL. Now, I'm told, the strapline is set out with COMMAS (Do none of them know how to write decent English??) And the new logo is....u3a. Lower case royal blue letters, on any background of your choice: white, yellow, black—Who cares when it is so unsuitable for an organization dedicated to LEARNING? How ignorant can you get? Lower case letters for a title, headline, whatever you want to call it. It looks stupid and uneducated. The first thing the tat-y members need to learn is how to write acceptable English. I am not inclined to change the strapline or the logo to something that looks so uninformed and ridiculous. It will create the impression that our organization is ill-informed, uneducated and silly, more concerned to be 'trendy' than to accomplish our stated aims. It looks cheap, crude, nasty, incomplete and unfinished. No, Mr-Whoever-decided-to-waste-all-our-money on such a stupid outcome. Why didn't you hold a competition among U3A members if you really want a new logo? I'm sure *somebody* among the 450,000 members out there could have come up with something better than this. I am assured that there is much indignation among the membership at this idiotic, and very costly, decision. If this is all they can do with OUR money, then I for one am very tempted to resign on the spot! But I simply can NOT edit a Newsletter that has such a pig's ear for a logo. So you will find the original logo on this issue unless the Committee takes me to task and INSISTS that we have the new one. With any luck, by then the membership will have forced a change and we will be reverting to a reasonable, properly-constructed logo. tat has lost all credibility in my eyes. And Another Thing: Our webmaster Andy has put the new logo on the Home Page of our website so you can see how awful it looks. But I refuse to be associated with such a thing.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 13th August 2020

I write this so that all those who didn't attend will know what happened. This was the day we should have been enrolling for the new year and signing up for our classes. This was not possible so we used the same date and time (on the principle that people would have set this aside anyway) for our belated AGM. This was to take place via Zoom and we needed a quorum (12.5% of the membership) which was 64. Quite a few people said they were interested; 35 registered that they would be attending (Andy needed to know so he could 'let them in' to the meeting. This keeps the meeting private and not open to anyone else.) 28 devices logged on (most with one person but several with



two or three). We got to ten o'clock and were still well short of a quorum. We are then supposed to wait for thirty minutes (that is meant to allow for late buses, traffic jams and other hold-ups) to see if any more turn up. By twenty past, it looked as if we had all who would be coming so at that point the AGM was opened. We discussed several questions but could not vote on anything. About twenty minutes later, the AGM was closed and re-arranged for next Thursday, 20th. On that occasion, however many people log in, that makes a quorum. They can vote on whatever comes up including the accounts and the re-election of those members of the committee who wish to stand again or are permitted to stand again. This means that thirty-odd people are deciding for 550 people what our U3A can do in the coming year.

I have to say that it could be unwieldy, even with just 28 devices logged in and 38 attendees (some log-ins = two people), but it was possible and it is better than nothing. (New Motto: IBTN. Have it printed on your T-shirt.) So, next week, we will be voting on whatever matters come up and if you were not there, that is your choice; and if you don't like the outcome, it is too late.

## Second ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 20th August 2020

We held this second AGM this morning and had near enough the same number of people in attendance. The votes were taken and we had a lively discussion about the (ever-changing) rules on venues and meetings. There was also a discussion about the possibility of enrolling online next year and keeping the same enrolment number from year to year. Now: we have three groups of members to consider. There are those who are online and do online banking and are perfectly happy to do everything online. Then there are those who are not online at all, have no computer and don't want one. They will continue to do everything on paper. And then there is the third group who are quite happy to do most things online but who do not want to do online banking. They will probably have to have a half-and-half approach. They should be able to enrol online, and receive a 'receipt' of some description once their payment has been received. But they will have to send a proper cheque to Paul (Membership Secretary) so that he knows you have not only re-enrolled but have paid your subscription as well. This can work and will work; we will make it work because, according to my new motto: It's Better Than Nothing (IBTN). (I do have an alternative New Motto: It Can Be Done = ICBD. Choose whichever suits you. I have an image on my door with the combined New Mottos.)



So: We are legal for another year though when next year's AGM will be held is anyone's guess. But we did remind the attendees that we need some new Officers and members of the committee to take over from next April – which is a fluid date: much depends on next year's AGM. We have about half the usual number of re-enrolled members at the moment and some alert person pointed out that, with half the number of members, we shall only need half the number to make a quorum. If this had been next year, 38 would have been a comfortable quorum. So it's not all bad.

*Ed.*

## NEW ZOOM GROUP

In October, Andrew Boatswain set up a Photography Group which is intended to help people get to grips with using the fullest range of options on their digital cameras. At first, there were very few (the Group was advertised on the website but I'm beginning to think that not everybody looks at that very often, despite all the information it can supply) and there is space for more people to join in. Don't be shy. It has taken me three years with my compact to discover exactly HOW to set my own values. (I had to read the instructions but as they are online and 185 pages of them, you can see why I haven't bothered until obliged to in order to fulfil the first task set by the Group Leader.) So if you are having the same trouble: leaving the thing permanently on AUTO and letting the machine do the thinking while your brain shrivels into nothing – contact Andrew (01458 832195 or look on the website paragraph about the Group) and join us to find out what your camera can do – if only you knew how to tell it to.

## NEW ZOOM GROUPS IN THE NEW YEAR

This is for those people who are really feeling the lack of their U3A Groups. Have you considered using Zoom for your Group? Read the reports from those who have been using it this term and you will see that though it isn't perfect, it can be used for quite a few of our Groups. Andy Pickford will take the Group Leader through what has to be done and the class members just have to click on the long code to take part. We hold our committee meetings this way and in this case, it is actually an improvement (Dare I say it?) on the usual ones in that we seem to get through the business in half the time. Have a think, read the reports, talk to anybody who is using Zoom for their Group and see whether it might work for you in January. NB It costs you nothing: the U3A pays the licence fee.



**PSNB** I have discovered why we all look weird on ZOOM! We are ALL laterally inverted! We are used to seeing *ourselves* laterally inverted: it happens every time we look in the mirror; it is why we always think pictures of ourselves do not look 'right': we are so conditioned by the physics of reflection. (Stand in front of the mirror and raise your right hand. You will see that it *appears* (in the mirror) as if you have raised your *left* hand. Try it and see.) BUT we see *other people* the 'right' way round. So when Zoom transposes the face, putting the left side on the right of the picture, and vice versa, we can't work out why they don't 'look right'. But I showed a printed document on the Zoom screen today and the lettering was back-to-front. And so it is with faces. I'm so glad I know why everybody else looks odd. Why I look odd.....that's another story!

Ed

## U3A DIARY PROJECT 2020

Some of you may know that at the start of the March Lockdown, the U3A began a Diary Project for people to submit items concerning the pandemic. The project is now closed and the contributions have been sifted and compiled into a book. (Cost £10 – get that out of the way first.) The Diary will be filled, as you would expect from U3A-persons, with gems of sparkling wit, tales of fortitude and ingenuity, ideas to while away the hot, summer days and how to use Zoom (maybe!). The book will be available to purchase soon although sending can't take place until the supplier has access to his warehouse again. Why am I telling you this? Well, Your Esteemed Editor has some items included in the Diary (wouldn't you know it?!) and I would like to know if anyone else in the S&G has contributed to it. If you have, let me know and you will be Mentioned in Despatches in the next Newsletter when I may be able to do a full-page review with pictures. (!)

(Modestly blushing, Ed)



## SAFE-SIX

I was a bit (actually, A LOT, mostly on behalf of all our members) peeved when our charitable exemption was removed without warning. The exemption would have meant that we could have more than six people present in a venue for educational purposes (or even 'organized sport') as long as we comply with both the national regulations and those drawn up by the venue concerned. And now (early September), with no warning, it's Six-Or-Else. I'm afraid the public is getting very fed up with the chopping and changing of the rules, especially with practically no notice at all. We have taken time and effort, as well as financial outlay, to comply with the rules set out; then they are changed at pointblank notice. I do hope all you U3A-ers are very grateful that the government is doing so much to keep all of us wrinklies so safe!

### THOUGHTS ON THE NEW WAVE (but before the Second Lockdown)

1 Since Summer we've had to go masked  
in a shop, though we cannot be asked;  
If the rule we ignore;  
they can't make us do more——  
The police with that job have been tasked!

2 We are not on a jolly-with-tea,  
Though we're over the age, don't you see?,  
Where we ought to stay home;  
Can't be trusted to roam:  
We might break a rule——if not three.

1st November 2020 (Second Lockdown announced 31st October)

1 He said it on All Hallows' Eve, and  
He's lucky that, though we are peeved,  
We don't think he spoke  
By the way of a joke,  
Though I don't think the people believe....

2....That he's done it for all of our sakes....No  
it's meant to prevent any breaks.  
We have to stay in,  
(With a cake and some gin),  
So the Health Service don't get the Shakes.

*Anon*

## GROUP REPORTS .

### GROUP LEADER COMMENTS ON COVID CLASSES

I have asked those Group Leaders who managed to run their classes how they have fared. These are their comments. NB Please note that it has not all been plain sailing but everybody seems to feel that, like the motto: It's Better Than Nothing.

### MEDIEVAL HISTORY

The term has been spent studying and discussing the years, 1215-1327, including the importance of Magna Carta, the long reign of Henry III, the rebellion of Simon de Montfort and Edward's conquest of Wales and invasion of Scotland. Focus in recent weeks has been on the disastrous reign of Edward II (1307-1327) and whether he was murdered at Berkeley Castle or escaped (as recent historians have argued) to live till a ripe old age in France or Italy. Despite some of the difficulties presented by Zoom the group has remained united and committed. Significant progress has been made in our understanding of the period. Future topics will include Edwards III's wars against the French, the murder of Richard II, Henry V and Agincourt. New members are always welcome – one of the advantages of Zoom: the size of the group does not matter

*WILTON WILLS*

### LINE DANCING

What a challenging time this has been, but as a group we are making every effort to keep fit and enjoy dancing to all types of music. We use a site called *Everything Line Dance*. It is not like Zoom and we are unable to see one another, but everyone has a password to access my site and can message me to say they have joined. The best part about this site is that within a few minutes of the session finishing it is available to be played back, so members can go over any bit they have found difficult in the lesson. Also if they are unable to attend live they are able to still keep abreast of what we are doing. For my part, it is quite challenging to go over all the dances each week, and therefore an hour's session is long enough. As I am using our lounge, my poor husband has to exit before we start. I have had a great response to continue after Xmas, so I shall have to get my thinking cap on to keep things fresh and exciting. Keep Dancing!

*ELAINE ROBERTSON*

## **FRENCH Beginners and Improvers**

I run Beginners and Improvers French via Zoom. The general consensus is that it works well as a second best. Obviously meeting in person is preferable. A downside is that numbers need to be kept low for maximum member participation.

SHIRLEY GUNTER

The note below may cause some blushing among the tutors but I hope it will encourage others who are hesitating about taking up or continuing with online sessions even if they are not 'perfect'. (And see also the comments from Wilton Wills further on):

*I just wanted to give you feedback on the online French class I attend, taught by Shirley Gunter. She is such a breath of fresh air. I am getting a lot more knowledgeable regarding speaking French, and so is everyone else from what I can see. It feels quite effortless because we have a good laugh while we are all learning. Last year, when I felt quite down sometimes, whenever I attended it really cheered me up. Best wishes, Eva Bryczkowski*



## **MEDIEVAL HISTORY and MUSIC APPRECIATION**

In September, the start for both these Groups was disappointing. Staff at the Tor Leisure Centre had made every effort to make their venue Covid-Secure and our first meeting was safe and successful. Then came [the removal of our charitable exemption] and we had to stop.

In my mind, Zoom was a non-starter. I rely very much on the rapport I have with the individuals in the Group and the unforced interaction between the individuals. The second AGM meeting this year opened my eyes to the possibilities of Zoom.\* With the help and encouragement of our Treasurer, Andy Pickford, I was able to get started. Initially, the only problem was that, on the 'free' meter, Zoom shuts itself down every forty minutes. But the

Committee has now decided to pay for a continuous Zoom licence which means we can stay on for as long as we like. The difficulties I have had since, I suspect, have been of my own making. Sometimes I can see and hear the group members and they can see me but not hear me. On one occasion, I managed to turn my image on the screen upside down which many group members regarded as an improvement! (I owe my deepest thanks to Andy for all his help and patience in these trying circumstances.)

All these difficulties have had a positive side: in my absence, the group members have chatted amongst themselves and developed a tremendous rapport. This has produced not only humour and laughter but a willingness to contribute their own ideas and knowledge. The lesson from this experiment is important. Using Zoom, we can break down the barriers of Covid-19 isolation and still 'meet' with other people. These meetings are real and not artificial [once people have got used to the oddities of only speaking one at a time]. The History group has a strong membership of twenty; the Music Appreciation group is twelve. Through Zoom we are meeting a social and educational need which, I think, will still be there in 2021.

WILTON WILLS

\*Note that AGM's do have their uses! Ed. NB The Zoom licence for any Group will be funded by the U3A but you MUST let Andy Pickford (Treasurer) know what you want to do.

## **MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP**



This is a new group, formed with all the best intentions. We have spent the term deciding the purpose of the group – highbrow or lowbrow. The consensus was to try to meet catholic tastes. The main difficulty, however, has been Zoom which does not lend itself to transmitting music, either from CDs or film. The attempts so far have



produced hilarity and laughter and has, surprisingly, been a catalyst in breaking down barriers and bringing members together. It suddenly hit me that this is one of the main functions of the U3A – not so much the content but breaking down the present isolation. It is quite unique how the British can laugh at their problems and how laughter can unite people. There has, however, been some music – Benjamin Britten's *Young Persons Guide to the Orchestra*, Maria Callas singing Rossini, Reading's Phoenix Choir, Karl Jenkins's *The Armed Man*, Rachmaninov and Chopin. Future meetings will cover great film music and Gilbert and Sullivan. New members are always welcome – one of the advantages of Zoom: the size of the group does not matter.

WILTON WILLS

## **MUSIC JAMMING ONLINE**

Well, what a year it has been. Though perhaps not the most ideal means of making music, our Music Jamming group has proven to be very adaptable. In the first instance of lockdown, Zoom soon became a means for a number of us to communicate and keep in touch. During these conversations the notion to make individual recordings, accompanying a backing track, which could then be merged to create a group performance was floated and put into practice. Several recordings were made most of which are featured on the Street and Glastonbury website. All this was a huge learning curve for all concerned. As our understanding of Zoom improved it became apparent that there was some scope for it to be used in a live context, which after some experimentation led to the resumption of Music Jamming in September. The following are some of the lessons we have learned.

Zoom sound quality can vary considerably according to the equipment that people have available to them so perfection is never feasible.

Live group performances as in a band or an orchestra are not possible because of latency (delays) created through the use of the internet.

A lead person can play and/or sing to other members for them to join in with their microphone muted to prevent feedback down the line. This is similar to what happens in informal music sessions in real life where people take it in turns to play and others join in.

Checking the volume settings of both microphone and speakers in Zoom is important so as to hear and to be heard.

The positioning of microphones relative to voice and instrument is important so that both can be heard clearly. Too close and distortion results; too far away and sounds become hard to hear.

Zoom automatically adjusts for the spoken voice. If left unchanged this means that a stripped-down version of an instrument sound is transmitted. The use of the Zoom "Enable Original Sound" function helps to improve the tonal quality for most instruments.

We now have an established routine where individuals volunteer to lead songs or tunes. This means that everyone has the opportunity to contribute to the choice of music and test their mettle in taking a lead. A set list is produced allowing members to prepare in advance. During the sessions the set list is followed and as each lead takes their turn all others mute their microphone and play and or sing along.

The following are some quotes from members of the group.

*"I'm really thankful for the opportunity to carry on with music jamming throughout the crisis. Being able to connect with friends and even play music together has been a lifesaver in terms of quality of life in lockdown! It's been an ever-evolving process and you've made it work extremely well for the whole group. We've all had a chance to learn new skills even including recording! Thank you ever so much for holding this space for us, and long may we continue!"*

*"Nothing can replace playing music with other people, but Zoom is a much-better-than-nothing substitute. As long as everyone understands the modus operandi, i.e. the necessity for all mics except one to be muted during a piece of music, it really does work well. It's also helped several people to gain confidence and offer to lead songs, thus sharing the effort, rather than the group leader having to do it all."*

*"First of all, many thanks for keeping the music group going. I think it's as good as it can be considering the circumstances that we all are facing. So let's keep going, and can we have some more of that wonderful piano playing from last week!"*

*"Well, Zoom isn't the best medium for playing music together, which "jamming" should be, because of the time lapse. However, it's better than not doing music at all and at least we can play along with whoever is leading the tune, even though we can't hear everyone else.*

*It is a bit stressful leading a tune because you have the pressure of having to get it right so others can play along. Then of course, that pressure can cause you to make mistakes.*

*But, until we can get together in person and play together properly, Zoom is the best we have. So I for one am happy to say, "Three cheers for Zoom" (even if you can't hear me)."*

*"I think the medium of Zoom is far from ideal, partly because of sound quality and partly because of the differing nature of different instruments, some of which work better than others. Guitar and ukes seem to work best.*

*Personally, I find an hour sufficient.*

*Without accompaniment some lead players seem to find it harder to keep time. Perhaps need to create more backing tracks.*

*On a positive note, it is great to see everyone and know that people still want to make music together despite the challenges. I guess we keep battling on until we can meet again in person. Thank you for your work in keeping the group together."*

TONY MARTIN



### **LOCKDOWN-LATIN Year Four and Year Seven.**

We met in the Church Room at Baltonsborough and as there are only five students and one leader, we were within the Rule-of-Six. (Does this sound like a Chinese dictatorship to you? Rule-of-Three??) For the first class, on 16th September, the weather was glorious: sunny, HOT even (26degrees), and calm. There was no quibble about opening all doors and all windows. In fact, it was very pleasant to have them open and allow the gentle Zephyrs to waft about us. I could even hear organ practice going on in the church across the churchyard. We were able to re-arrange the seating so that everyone was at least two metres from everyone else and from me, with the board, at the front. Hand gel, antic-bac spray and wipes were provided by the Room although I took emergency supplies with me just in case. I also had a list of all names, addresses and telephone numbers for their Book for Track-and-Trace. Well: no Trace of book despite some Tracking. Did NOT look too far; did not want to have to wipe down all the cupboards, drawers etc. so restricted the Tracking to a visual sweep of the visible surfaces. We did not use the kitchen at all, each taking our own drink for the break and remaining, by and large, in our places. If it had been chilly, there is enough room for us to move about while still staying at the prescribed distance.



Update 4th November. We have coped with windy days and very rainy days and chilly days during our classes this term but then came the announcement of the Second Lockdown. Well, we couldn't fight that so the last session was held on Wednesday, 4th. The weather was very much like the first session, back in September, but the temperature was nearly twenty degrees lower! We did cave in and shut one window halfway through. But we have coped, managed, even the day I forgot to close a window and had to go haring back, in the dark and the pounding rain, to check. It was still open but fortunately the rain was going the other way so I had only to go in, close it and drive all the way home. As others have said, it works and we have been fortunate to be able to have eight out of twelve sessions this term. Hoping we can resume some form of face-to-face session in the new year,

*PAT THOMPSON*

### **GREEK TRAGEDY PLAY-READING**

I have been running my Greek Tragedy class on Zoom. First of all I should like to thank Andy Pickford for setting this up for us each time and the U3A for paying for the 2-hour sessions. It took us a little while to decide to go ahead, but as it was either Zoom or nothing, we decided to give it a go. However, we did lose some members; instead of our usual thirteen we have ended up with seven which is a great pity. As to reactions from the members, most are settling into the new regime and getting used to this way of communicating although one or two are not very happy. As the class consists of reading and discussing, we have found we can do this fairly satisfactorily although we have to be careful not to talk over each other. I had hoped that the interest in the play we are reading, and the fascinating discussions it has led to, would make people forget the medium and I think that is happening to a certain extent and anyway, we can relieve the tension with our coffee break which we still have! What times we live in!

*JENNIFER WESTCOTT*

### **UKULELE**

Well, this has been a strange term! Being unable to meet in person we decided to have a go at running the class via Zoom. Understandably not everyone was happy to do this but 27 of the group decided to try it. Unfortunately Zoom is not a great medium for music and different computers/tablets give different results. However, we are learning! It is impossible for us all to play together through our microphones due to delays from differing technologies, which results in a chaos of sound. Because of this we work it by having a single leader for each song, everyone else mutes their microphones and plays along with the leader, basically creating a duet. Different people volunteer to lead throughout the session. This is very different to us all playing together but under present circumstances it is better than nothing. Having said that, I have surveyed the group and it seems unanimous that we carry on at least until Christmas and possibly into the new year if there is no alternative. The majority of the group said that it gave them an incentive to practise and that they enjoyed keeping in contact with all the other members. We are going to have a go at learning new songs and also throwing in a bit of instruction as well as simply playing along. Some people have struggled with hearing the music clearly but we have found that using headphones helps considerably, although you do need half an ear out to be able to hear your own playing! May I wish everyone well and I hope it won't be too long before we can meet again. Thank goodness for technology!!

*WENDY HOWIANTZ*

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If you have read these reports with your Alert button engaged you will see that opinions differ. Some feel that Zoom restricts things; some feel that it opens up possibilities. It seems that Zoom is definitely not designed to cope with music of any sort but conversation can proceed as long as good manners are observed. I do hope that members, and Group Leaders, who have so far hesitated to consider the online possibilities may feel that they might like to attempt Zoom meetings for their group (obviously, it will not work at all for some groups) and with a little imagination and invention, a few more groups may be able to run in the new year, whether or not we are locked-down in 'real' life.

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