



News and views from across Ilkley & District U3A

Three cheers for volunteers

It's been a hectic year for members working hard behind the scenes

This has been a very busy year for our U3A but much of the business has gone on behind the scenes.

To most members, groups have functioned as usual and there have been few outward signs of the huge changes that have occurred.

However, changes in legislation and compliance with the Charity Commission proved a challenge to both the trustees and the backroom volunteers who give vital support.

At the start of the year the trustees had to deal with a forced change in our constitution to comply with a Charity Commission ruling. Altering the wording of the Objects clause was the easy bit but as a result we had to hold an EGM and change the way some group finances were organised.

Then in May, the need to comply with EU legislation on General Data Protection Regulations required a total rethink on how membership data is stored and what permissions are needed to store it. This meant rewriting joining forms and developing new Privacy and Data Protection Policies – work led by the membership secretary.



Two members redesigned our website, making it much more user-friendly

In addition to these, the trustees have introduced some new initiatives, the most visible of which is our new-look website. Thanks to the work of two of our "backroom boys" – Ian Martin and Peter Burnell – we now have a splendid new website which is more attractive and easy to use.

At the same time, we have taken our work on social responsibility in new directions with initiatives on reading in schools and working with care homes. Our U3A also played a big part in the

successful Working Together day held at the Kings Hall in April.

Ilkley & District U3A continues to thrive, thanks largely to the hard work of the management committee of trustees, group leaders and the teams of volunteers who support them.

Thanks also to you, our members. In the true embodiment of a self-help organisation, we couldn't function without your continuing help in providing new ideas for groups and study days, and replenishing our volunteer teams.

Enter our short story competition



Photo: marekullasz

We all know how imaginative Ilkley & District U3A members are – just look at the huge range of groups, activities and events that are held.

Now we want to highlight that wonderful creativity by launching a short story competition.

The competition is open to all members and the subject matter can be whatever takes your fancy. Each story must be an original work of fiction and be no more than 500 words. The winning entry will be published in The Eye next spring and the winner will receive a book token worth £25, thanks to a contribution from

The Grove Bookshop, Ilkley.

The entries will be judged by members of our communications team and the Creative Writing Group (CWG).

But we want to stress that entrants do not have to be CWG members and all entries will be judged anonymously.

Please send your entries by email to info@ilkleyu3a.org by February 28, 2019. If you do not have access to email, handwritten or typed entries may be sent to Short Story Competition, Ilkley & District U3A, c/o The Clarke Foley Centre, Cunliffe Road, Ilkley, LS29 9DZ to arrive by that date.

Wishing all our members a happy and successful 2019

Uncovering a murder most foul

As a child at her Nana's knee, Susan Robinson learned about a deed most foul that befell her great-aunt during the First World War.

When Susan started the Tracing Your Family History Group she was determined to find out more about this blot on her family's escutcheon.

First port of call was the death certificate of 35-year-old Emily Pickering showing cause of death in Selby Cottage Hospital to be "asphyxia from haemorrhage consequent on a cut in the throat with a razor blade."

A subsequent visit to Leeds Central Library Family History Centre served up the shocking details of her untimely death. In cold print, the Leeds Mercury of January 21, 1916 reported the "terrible tragedy" of the young woman's murder at the hands of her husband, railway worker Charles Pickering who, the paper reported, "was labouring under some mental aberration".

The couple, who had five children, were reported to have lived "an unhappy life for some years".

"It was quite surreal to see my Nana's tale in a newspaper," said Susan. "My next quest is to try to get a report of the trial."

Westminster life revealed

Keighley and Ilkley MP John Grogan gave an animated talk to members at the Saturday meeting in July.

Having previously represented Selby as a Labour MP from 1997



to 2006, he had plenty of amusing anecdotes to tell about the ups and downs of life in Westminster, proving that a sense of humour is vital for the job.

After his talk, John answered a barrage of questions from the floor and didn't shy away from tackling difficult issues such as Brexit and the Momentum movement in the Labour Party. During his address, John invited members of our U3A to visit the Houses of Parliament at Westminster and subsequently, two study days have been arranged for November and December.

Enthusiasm and teamwork is the key to our success

Anne Eady, membership secretary of Ilkley & District U3A, explains what her role involves.

You might be wondering why it is necessary to describe what a membership secretary does – the job title is self-explanatory, isn't it?

While the membership secretary does "look after" members, this is more a secretarial than a pastoral role, carried out mostly behind the scenes. The core duties are processing membership enrolments and renewals and maintaining the electronic membership directory.

We "lose" about 300 members per annum so, just to stay the same size, we need to recruit that number each year. We've done much better than that and our U3A has grown every year.

Almost one third of our members pay by cash or cheque, which means many trips to the bank especially during our renewal season. Several members say they have found difficulty paying via the website and we hope to make electronic payments easier in future.

As well as membership secretary, I wear two other hats. I am data protection officer (DPO) and run the "Oiling The Wheels" team, though the latter usually runs itself with very little input from me. It provides IT support across all our activities and helps to make our organisation run efficiently.

Two team members expertly managed the transition to our new-look website.

Day to day, the team responds to requests, most of their instructions coming from the groups co-ordinator Mary Podesta or, if it concerns the summer programme, from our chair Sue Butler.

Gunilla Vriesendorp, our webmaster and

my predecessor as membership secretary, is still on hand and I couldn't manage without her continuing support and expertise. She still trains everyone who helps with administration and who needs to learn how to use our software.

As our DPO, I've drafted our privacy policy, guidelines for our group leaders on the new European General Data Protection Regulation and our new data protection policy. It's been a steep learning curve but not as boring as you might imagine!

As our U3A grows, our roles expand as well. The membership secretary role has evolved into the three distinct activities, all of which are related but could be done by different people.

When my three years are up, I hope the membership administration will be split from those of data protection and provision of IT support.

I'll end by sharing the expertise needed to be our membership secretary and what I've gained to date. You need enthusiasm, a willingness to develop new skills and trust in those who support you as their input is vital.

It is important to learn to use the software as this underpins most of what the role entails. The only related skill I brought from my past

life as a scientist was a familiarity with Excel spreadsheets!

I've thoroughly enjoyed my first 18 months, the first half of which I spent practising aspects of the job before taking over entirely.

While I'm very much a back-room person, one of the positives for me has been learning from other volunteers with different knowledge, experience and expertise from my own. It continues to be a pleasure to work with them.



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'I've thoroughly enjoyed my first 18 months'

The summer drop-in held in Otley proved a big success with prospective and existing members calling in to find out more about U3A activities.

Four members, Angie Grain, Anne Eady, Carole Bayly and Eileen Green manned the drop-in, speaking to about 20 people during the 90-minute session.

Many visitors asked about U3A activities within Otley itself.

Drop-in success

There is only a small number at present but we are keen to encourage more. So if you have an idea for a new group in Otley, contact groups co-ordinator Mary Podesta at mezzapod@gmail.com

Mary's always happy to help.

Delight – whatever the weather

The Garden Visits Group had an unusual season of visits this year.

The first visit in March was called off by the owners because of snow and the final had to be revised after the planned garden visit was cancelled by the owner because of the drought.

In early July the group enjoyed a fascinating trip to Greencroft at Littlethorpe, a private garden created over many years from a field.

The beautiful, colourful planting is done by owner Sally and the imaginative



hard landscaping by her husband.

The photo, taken by member Diane Smith, shows eight of the group members and the owners in one part of the garden.

Rejoicing at the end of a terrible war

Ilkley greeted the end of the First World War with relief and gratitude, writes Richard Thakrah, leader of the History of Ilkley in War and Peace group.

Great rejoicing occurred in the town on the morning of Monday, November 11, when the curtain came down on the most terrible war in history.

Some rejoiced in a boisterous and hilarious manner and others with a more sober thankfulness. In a very short time flags were everywhere and the streets became crowded. Wounded soldiers from Ilkley Military Hospital purloined a tradesman's dray to ride around the town.

Others broke into the Volunteers' band room to secure bugles and drums for the festivities. Businesses were suspended at midday, shops were closed and the parish church bells rang out. Huge numbers of fireworks were set off and even though national schools opened in the afternoon there were many absentees.

Visitors to the Craiglands invited all wounded soldiers in hospitals and at St Dunstan's to an entertainment and tea at the Hydro. The badly wounded were brought in cabs and proceedings commenced with soldiers marching to the tune See The Conquering Hero Comes.

On Thanksgiving Sunday, November 7,

1,300 people attended a united service at St Margaret's. Meanwhile, Belgian refugees expressed gratitude for their four years' stay in the town.

Ilkley servicemen suffered many casualties, but a good number were recipients of war honours for deeds of valour. By the end of 1918, prisoners of war, who had suffered much harsh treatment in Germany, began to arrive home.

On November 29, an editorial in the Ilkley Gazette called for a war memorial.

"May the soldiers' memorial, whatever is decided upon, whatever its nature, be worthy of the town and worthy of the cause and thoroughly representative of every heart-throb of the people," the paper said.

The following week council members agreed that "not only should there be a memorial to the fallen, but also as a reward and appreciation of the efforts and sacrifices of men who were spared to return home."

• Among the many tributes at the memorial on November 11 2018, a remarkable wreath of many colours created by the Craft Group, pays homage to the 'unremembered', the men and women who provided support services for those who fought. The group's contribution was at the invitation of The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in March.

Bright way to attract recruits

As members of Ilkley & District U3A we are well aware we belong to a wonderful organisation with a vast array of opportunities for life-long learning and making new friendships.

But there are many in our community who simply do not know of our existence.

So an A5-size leaflet (shown below), which encourages folk to make contact has now been produced. Members John Hancock and Valerie Halton volunteered to help and together came up with the wording and eye-catching design.



Look out for these promotional leaflets in places such as GPs surgeries, libraries and even local shops. If you know of a suitable place to display the leaflets and help spread the word, please contact info@ilkleyu3a.org

Good old sing-song

Members of the Singalong 4 Fun Group helped residents at Abbeydale Residential Home in Ilkley take a trip down memory lane when they held a concert called "The Good Old Days". Residents enjoyed listening and singing along to popular songs, including Burlington Bertie from Bow, Hello, Hello, Who's Your Lady Friend, In The Twi-Twi-Twilight and My Girl's A Yorkshire Girl.

The group has been busy rehearsing for its Christmas programme to be followed by "Songs From The Shows" in 2019.

Double the fun for members of the Piano Duets Group



Now in its third year, the Piano Duets Group has been having a lot of fun.

Many of its 18 members had neglected the piano during years of working and raising families but now playing with a partner has given them the motivation to sit down and practise.

They work in pairs of similar ability – members have everything from Grade 2 to LRAM – and practise at a convenient time in each other's homes. Everyone says that they spend a lot of the time

laughing!

The whole group gets together four or five times a year to play to the others' pieces they have been learning. Having four hands on one keyboard allows you to make a bigger sound and it is a very sociable activity.

Members say they have all improved their playing, gained in confidence and made new friends. And they wonder: are they alone in the U3A – do any other U3As have duet groups?

Courtroom dramas keep our members entertained

Members found themselves inadvertently in the dock on two trips this summer.

In September, the Northern Towns Group went to Ripon's three museums – the Workhouse, the Police Museum and the Courthouse Museum – as part of its visit to England's oldest city.

Members thoroughly enjoyed the trip, saying the Workhouse Museum, in particular, was a "must see".



Summer School participants experience Bradford City Hall courthouse.

At the Courthouse they were encouraged to participate in a mock trial, where they were impressed and delighted at the talent of the thespians among them!

Two months earlier, 35 people visited Bradford as part of the Summer School.

A walking tour discovering many Victorian architectural masterpieces was followed by lunch in Sunbridge Wells, now an underground complex in the heart of Bradford housing bars and restaurants.

It had previously served as a quarry, a 16th century dungeon and a Second World War air raid shelter.

Bradford's Police Museum, dubbed another "hidden gem" by the visitors, included a tour of the cells, which were constructed as part of the City Hall.

They entered the courtroom as if they were prisoners being led from the cells below. If the photograph of them in the courtroom looks familiar, it is because



Northern Towns Group member "judge" Jeanette Wallace delivers her verdict in Ripon.

this court is used in various film and TV dramas. Next up is the filming of John Malkovich as Hercule Poirot in the new BBC adaptation of the ABC Murders. You read it here first!



Making music

A number of our U3A musical groups took part in events at the Bandstand as part of the Ilkley Summer Festival in August.

The sessions were co-ordinated by Jez Quayle, musical director of the bi-weekly Sixties Music Group. Its members were joined by the Guitar and Ukulele Groups and played some eight hours of music over the two afternoons.

At one point on the sunny Saturday afternoon, the crowd exceeded 500, with some spectacular dancing supported by the Hollygarth Sixties dancers.

Loud and clear

The audio tour guide facility was used for a record six visits by a total of 175 members in July.

The equipment is available for use by any of our groups. If you think it might be beneficial on a visit, please contact John Hancock on octopuss@btinternet.com

Still on the menu after 20 years

The Stroll To Lunch Group has been meeting regularly each fortnight without a break for 20 years.

Right at the start of Ilkley & District U3A, George and Enid Brewster were the first leaders of the group.

Strolls are planned annually in advance and each member is expected to take a turn in sharing the arrangements and selections. Cancellations are rare, as bad weather can usually be overcome in the nearest coffee shop.

On occasions members have enjoyed treasure trails and guided talks and always have a special lunch at Christmas.



Recently John Shaw celebrated his stint of organising 40 individual strolls. He came with a decorated cake, which was shared at lunch instead of ordering desserts.

Further details and how to register are shown on the U3A website or by calling Pat Earl on 01943 463257 or Hilary Greaves on 01943 874295.



Railway Group members inspect the single platform at Colne that currently has one two-coach train per hour to Burnley and Preston. The station has not seen this many visitors in many a year!

On the right track?

Could we see the rebirth of the Colne to Skipton railway line, which opened on October 2, 1848 and closed on February 1, 1970?

A group has been campaigning for the past 20 years and it looks as though its proposals might now be about to receive Government backing.

The line will provide a low-cost alternative route for freight across the Pennines and open up many new journey opportunities for both leisure and commuter traffic.

In June, Railway Group members met some of the campaigners, starting with a briefing at Café Cargo in Foulridge.

The group visited various parts of the original trackbed which has been preserved throughout its entire length. They discussed some of the engineering challenges which lie ahead, including how to cross the busy dual carriageway leading to the M65 at Boundary Mills in Colne and bridging both the bypass and River Aire near Skipton.