



# *The Sentinel*

*The newsletter of Balsall Common U3A*  
*Editor Len Tommie*

January 2021

## Chairman's monthly review



The good news came at the start of December with the announcement that the UK had become the first country in the world to approve the Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine, paving the way for mass vaccination. With the vaccination programme now being rolled out it is hoped that 2021 will, at some point, start the return to some normality. However with the new mutation of the virus Christmas was almost cancelled for millions and like many of us The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh had to spend Christmas quietly without their family.

**There is still no change to the decision that there will be no core meetings nor face to face group meetings before April 2021 but that it is hoped that the AGM will be held at the core meeting on 13th May 2021.**

Unfortunately Ian Hedley has had to resign as Vice Chairman & Business Secretary. His presence at our committee meetings will be sadly missed and the advice he gave was invaluable. I am pleased to report that Barbara Hammonds has agreed to take over as Business Secretary until the AGM.

Meteorologically, things have been interesting this month. Edinburgh experienced “thundersnow” caused by heavy snowfall during thunder and lightning. The Met Office declared 2020 a “white Christmas” with

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snowfalls in Humberside & Suffolk. Meanwhile the year ended with Storm Bella wreaking havoc. The winter solstice was on 21st December, marking the beginning of astronomical winter and the shortest day. As the stargazers amongst us will know, on that day Jupiter & Saturn were in “close conjunction” and observable for the first time since 1226.

Among the sectors which have suffered during this pandemic are aerospace, automotive industry, maritime, retail, sport, hospitality & tourism and arts & heritage. The face of the High Street has changed so much during this pandemic with countless businesses going into administration causing many branches to disappear. I started to do a list, but when I reached over thirty companies, I felt that it would be too depressing to continue. My thoughts go out to all those staff who have been affected.

The Royal Mint marked Christmas Day by issuing a commemorative 50p featuring Raymond Brigg’s Snowman, but it costs between £12 and £1,125. Incidentally where have all the UK banknotes gone? The National Audit Office reported £50bn “missing” currency or about three quarters of all existing UK banknotes. From January 1st a first class stamp rises by 9p to 85p, with the second class going up 1p. Do you remember first class postage being introduced in 1968 when it cost 5d?

On TV Bill Bailey was crowned the winner of this year's Strictly Come Dancing, becoming the oldest celebrity to lift the glitterball trophy. He shared his triumph with partner Oti Mabuse, the first Strictly dancer to win two years in a row. Lewis Hamilton was voted Sports Personality of the Year. Can you imagine sixty years of “Coronation Street” (with 57 births, 131 marriages and 146 deaths, 4 royal visits and 10 BAFTAs) and it’s still going strong? And who is going to replace Nick Hewer as host of “Countdown”?

Richard Osman’s cosy mystery about a group of elderly sleuths, “The Thursday Murder Club”, has become the first debut novel ever to become the Christmas No 1.

As ever, interesting things have happened in the sporting world. I'll start with the seven marathons run in seven days by Kevin Sinfield, the Leeds Rhinos captain. With this extraordinary feat of endurance he raised nearly £1.5m for the Motor Neurone Disease Association in support of his former team-mate Rob Burrow.

Other December sporting highlights I spotted are in:

*Boxing:* In two heavyweight fights, underdog Joe Joyce beat Daniel Dubois which was stopped in the tenth round. He now holds the British, Commonwealth and European titles. Meanwhile Anthony Joshua knocked out Kubrat Pulev to raise hopes that a historic fight against the WBC titleholder, Tyson Fury, could soon be a reality.

*Football:* In the Scottish Cup final Celtic completed a historic quadruple treble with a dramatic penalty shootout beating Hearts 4 - 3 to lift the Cup for a 40th time.

*F1:* Lewis Hamilton celebrated his seventh world championship by winning the Bahrain Grand Prix that will be remembered for Romain Grosjean's remarkable escape from his fireball inferno. Hamilton missed the Sakhir GP, as he had to isolate with coronavirus symptoms, which Sergio Perez won to claim his first ever F1 victory. Hamilton has still to renew his contract with Mercedes.

*Golf:* Lee Westwood clinched the Race to Dubai title to end a season as the European Tour's No. 1 player for the third time after a crazy finish to the DP World Tour Championship which was won by Matt Fitzpatrick. For only the third time in the U.S. Women's Open it had to move into Monday without a playoff as the final round was suspended by inclement weather. South Korea's A Lim Kim capped a final-round 67 with three consecutive birdies to clinch a one-shot victory.

*Horse Racing:* Bryony Frost became the first female jockey to win the King George VI Chase, riding Frodon to victory at Kempton. At 20-1 they led throughout the 3 mile race. For a fifth time in a decade the

Welsh Grand National meeting at Chepstow was postponed because of a waterlogged course, this time caused by Storm Bella. The race has been rescheduled for January 9th.

*Rugby League:* St Helens beat Wigan 8 - 4 in the Super League Grand Final with a last-gasp try. *Rugby Union:* England needed extra time to extinguish France's brave resistance as they lifted the inaugural Autumn Nations Cup with a 22 - 19 victory in front of 2,000 noisy fans at Twickenham.

*Snooker:* Neil Robertson edged past world number one Judd Trump 10 - 9 to win his third UK Championship in what was an unforgettably epic late night final.

*Darts:* The PDC World Championship finishes on January 1st.

*Olympic Games 2024:* Four new events are to be included in Paris – Breakdancing (aka Breaking), Skateboarding, Surfing (albeit in Tahiti) and Sports Climbing. Anyone interested?

Despite 2020 being a terrible year there are reasons to be cheerful. We should thank our lucky stars that we are safe and at least are around to pick up the pieces. Maybe we should start to make the world a greener, safer and better place to live in 2021. So I will end this year by wishing you all a Scottish salutation “Lang may your lum reek” and I look forward to face to face meetings starting up in the not too distant future.

Jim Melville 27/12/2020



## **Membership fees for 2021**

The Membership Fee for new members wishing to join in 2021 will be £11.25 (or £9.00 from 1st July). This is set lower than the Membership Fee for 2020 to recognise that, although underlying costs require an increase, it is unlikely we will return to having Core Meetings before April 2021. However the fee for 2022 will need to be increased further if current cost trends continue.

**In the light of the continuing Covid19 restrictions, existing members of Balsall Common U3A will be able to renew their membership at a reduced fee of £4.75.**

To benefit from this, payment must be by cheque (payable to Balsall Common U3A) between 1st January 2021 and 14th March 2021. This can be “posted” to the treasurer, Richard Drake at “Merrivale”, Green Lane, Balsall Common, Coventry CV7 7EJ.

Only a renewal payment by cheque will be accepted for the reduced membership fee of £4.75, as this method allows the treasurer to “track and trace” individual payments properly. Regrettably any other renewal payments will incur the full fee of £11.25.

If any member has not renewed by 31st March their membership will be terminated. Therefore, any members rejoining after 1st April will be required to pay the full membership fee.

Because of the unusual circumstances we are in, this proposal has been agreed by members of the Executive Committee and will not go for approval by the membership at a Special General meeting.

**So the headlines are: 2021 Membership fee for existing members paying by cheque before 14th March 2021 £4.75**

**Membership fee for new members £11.25 (£9 from 1st July)**

## **Balsall Common U3A Website.**

Our website will be 10 years old in January 2021. With the rebranding of the u3a, new logos and colour schemes, you may have read about in the December issue of the Sentinel, I have taken the opportunity to update and refresh our website to reflect the new fresh image of the u3a.

In the update I have given each page a uniform look and have also increased the size of the text to make it more easily readable. The site contains all information about the various groups, as well as Core Meetings (when they return). On the Members page you can find a list of all Committee Members, Group Coordinators, the Balsall Common U3A Constitution, copies of the Minutes for all Committee Meetings and AGMs as well as details of annual accounts for all years since 2011. All Policy documents for Balsall Common U3A are available be viewed here.

On the left of the home page below the Activity Group buttons is a button labelled "Useful Links and Local u3as" I have added links to sites useful to our members including local churches, doctors, local Parish Councils, SMBC, Refuse collection information, bus timetables and so on. You will also find links to the websites of u3a's that surround us. Please let me know of any websites you think will of interest to our members and I will include them, providing they are not overtly political or religious.

Finally the Sentinel; Len Tomnie, the editor, does an admirable job in creating this news letter each month. The document he produces has to be of a text size that allows economical printing. When you receive it by email you may have difficulty in reading it on your PC, Tablet or Smartphone. Len and I have agreed that shortly after you receive your Sentinel email I will put a larger text version of the document on the website. A button is at the top of home page to open this copy to allow easier reading on a digital device.

If you have any comments about our website  
[www.balsallcommonu3a.org](http://www.balsallcommonu3a.org) please email [petercalver@outlook.com](mailto:petercalver@outlook.com).

## More u3a Eye Entries

More entries from members of our photography group in the u3a Eye competition

“My Favourite Things,



Cheesecake by Karen Coates



Cup Cakes by Angela Reid

*Singing in the shower is all fun and games until you get shampoo in your mouth. Then it becomes a soap opera.*

## **December update from Allan Walmsley Third Age Trust Trustee, West Midlands Member**

The various national working parties and sub-committees have been beavering away providing more online options for u3as during the winter and below I have pulled together a series of recent ideas that you may wish to discuss in your committees, circulate to your members, or copy into your newsletters.

Volunteer Fest 11 to 15 January

The first ever week-long programme is planned to give volunteering a flying start to

2021 covering :

- Trust Induction for new and existing volunteers
- Training presentations
- Discussion sessions, on GDPR and Safeguarding , covering the essentials for all volunteers

- Presentations, from different relevant projects in the u3a.
- Lunch and Learn sessions,
- Social events , getting to know each other
- Volunteer Opportunities and launching of our Volunteer page
- Opportunities to network with other volunteers and your regional teams
- #WeVolunteerU3A - campaign

We are asking all Trust Volunteers new and existing volunteers to attend as this will be an opportunity to get you started with volunteering for the year ahead. It also provides a refresher for existing volunteers and an opportunity to meet all of our trust volunteers from across the u3a, sharing your experiences with those in similar roles and establishing on-going support groups. There will more details to follow and the bookings will be open to you on the u3a website

from 26th December at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/online-events>  
 U3a Radio Podcasts - volunteers (including some experienced radio presenters) have started regular podcasts on u3a Radio. Have a listen on

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrqc8qYDZ4U24lq0J4qx0fQ>

### **Recruitment Campaign**

I am delighted that 4 more u3as have shown an interest in the Recruitment Working Party that is currently supporting Pathfinder u3as. The Working Group has produced a number of draft guides which may be of interest to your u3a. The new guides cover the breadth of recruitment activities and are listed below. They are all available to download from the Notts Network website.

The link to the guides on the website is:

<https://www.nottsu3anetwork.org/draft-recruitment-guides.html>

- Checklist: Preparing to recruit
- Market research report for Third Age Trust

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- How to guide: developing a shared recruitment project with your members
- How to guide: effective marketing plan
- How to guide: making your interest group offer irresistible to prospective members
- How to guide: Seven steps to recruiting more interest group convenors
- How to guide: Transforming your website
- Model letters for recruitment and awareness raising
- Model letter: organisations running pre-retirement courses
- Model letter: influencers: councillors/MPs/ faith communities, health professionals
- Model letter: employers and HR managers

Videos To Encourage Video Conferencing - As there are many members that still struggle with Zoom, here are a series of YouTube videos made by a u3a volunteer which are designed to inspire, encourage and support your interest groups to get online. You can watch the videos in any order.

Part 1 Zoom - Why should I bother? This video discusses the benefits of going on line and how easy it is. The link is: [https://youtu.be/\\_2rhBgkocLo](https://youtu.be/_2rhBgkocLo)

Part 2 Get your group on line in 5 simple steps This video breaks down the process of getting on line into 5 simple steps. The link is: <https://youtu.be/Bu9L83gKir0>

Part 3 Zoom screen sharing for u3a interest groups This video focusses on the key facility for interest groups: the ability to share screens and therefore share any type of content in the course of an interest group meeting. The link is: <https://youtu.be/ZNRQ0roQ8G4>

Part 4 Zoom for every u3a interest group. Rather bravely, I argue the case that any and every interest group can go online and focus in

particular on a dance interest group: Scottish Country Dancing. The link is: <https://youtu.be/LeFKqZVyQxw>

Part 5 Hosting your zoom u3a interest group This video focusses on key Zoom controls for interest group leaders and introduces what you can do with a YouTube account. The link is: [https://youtu.be/ax\\_TtHg7Tfw](https://youtu.be/ax_TtHg7Tfw)

*If you know of any member who is in hospital, ill at home or bereaved, please inform a committee member and, if appropriate we will arrange to contact the member.*