



The Sentinel

The newsletter of Balsall Common u3a



Chair's message July 2022



I hope that everyone enjoyed a pleasant June — certainly there has been some warm sunshine to help — and Angela and I have enjoyed a family holiday in Dorset.

Unfortunately, I missed our Core Meeting when our Guest Speaker gave a heart-warming presentation on the work carried out by our local charity: Spencer's Retreat.

Before that, the month kicked off with two very special Community events, in each of which we played a vital role.

Firstly, our u3a played a key stewarding and security role at the recent Platinum Jubilee Festival on Friday 3rd June. Despite the weather, over 1,000 attended and, by speaking to people from our decorated gazebo and around the site, we certainly raised the profile of Balsall Common u3a! I must say, that the musical entertainment from "Old Time Sailors" and "Chasing Deer" were first class. See photos on pages 8 & 9.

... And, talking of first class musical entertainment, Angela, Liz Carter and other u3a friends attended the Harper Fields Care Home Jubilee Concert where the u3a Swing Division gave two fabulous 30 minute sessions. It really was quite moving to see the response from the audience.

As you can see from the pictures, a great afternoon was had by all. We were royally entertained by Harper Fields and a surprise guest turned up! See photos on page 10.

Forthcoming Events:

The Solihull u3a Cluster Group (which includes Balsall Common) has a stand in Solihull Town Centre (corner of High Street and Drury Lane) on Saturday 9th July. It's the 40th anniversary of u3a so please try to get along. Our colleagues Juliet Hancox and Barbara & Phil Hammonds are helping out on the day.

The Balsall Common u3a Dance and Fish & Chip Supper with music from The Prime Numbers (featuring our very own Jim Henry as lead singer) will take place on Saturday 24th September — tickets will be on sale from Monday 4th July — see poster on pages 11 & 12.

The next Core Meeting will be on Thursday 7th July in St Peters Hall at 2.00 pm when our Guest Speaker will be the Space Commentator, Andrew Lound, whose subject is "To see the beginning of time" — it should be fascinating!

Let's all enjoy our u3a and continue to Learn, Laugh and Live!

Best wishes, *Matthew Stephens*

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Bird Watching

On an overcast but warm June morning, the birding group visited the Christopher Cadbury Wetland Reserve at Upton Warren (near Bromsgrove). There were gremlins in the air, as poor signposting and an inaccurate postcode led to several members getting lost and unable to find the car park, but eventually everyone arrived and we regrouped and set off into the reserve.

We started with 'the flashes', shallow saline pools on the site of an old salt extraction mine. The area hosts a number of breeding wading birds and gulls. We saw avocets and their

chicks, little ringed plover, oyster catchers, lapwing and black headed gulls and their young. A number of ducks included pochard as well as the usual mallard, gadwall, and tufted duck. Canada geese and greylag geese also had young.

The site is split into two halves, so we drove in a convoy to park at 'the moors' section of the reserve, an area of deep freshwater pools and woodland. Here we enjoyed a picnic lunch in the first hide, while watching a heron fishing. We were treated to birthday cake and sparkling water courtesy of Geoff and Flick. Happy Birthday Geoff! One of our members saw a water rail while the rest of us were tucking in to lunch. We moved on to the remaining hides with the threat of rain in the air. Little egret, swallows and house martins were added to our list. At the bird feeders we had excellent views of vivid greenfinch and reed bunting, and the final hide saved the best for last — as the heavens opened and torrential rain fell, we had fantastic views of reed warbler, sedge warbler and another obliging water rail, perching in clear view as the rain fell around it.

The rain soon stopped, and we made our way back to the cars and homeward. Our next outing is on Wednesday 6th July, when we will be visiting the Attenborough nature reserve, near Nottingham. If you would like to join us, please email me on birdwatching@balsallcommonu3a.org

Juliet Hancox

Book Club

Vivienne runs the book club that is held on the 3rd Wednesday of alternative (odd) months and we now have a vacancy if you would like to join us. We meet in each other's houses where the meeting is led by the person who has chosen that month's book.

We have read many different types of books over the past few years including: *Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult, *Snow Falling*

on Cedars by David Guterson and *Oh Dear Sylvia* by Dawn French.

We are a very informal friendly group who just like reading and trying different genres that we may not have tried before. So if you are interested please do contact Vivienne Waterer, on 01676 532 308 or waterer345@btinternet.com

Vivienne Waterer

Family History

The next meeting of the family history group will be on 18th July at 2 pm. Anyone interested please contact me on this email address: farmerr64@gmail.com

Bob Farmer

Photography

Balsall Common u3a members continue to be well represented in the national u3a Eye competition. U3a members are requested to submit their best/most interesting photo on a selected theme and fifteen are picked by the judges based not only on the quality of the image but also on the interpretation of the theme.

Two members of this group had their images selected on the topic of "Framed". Congratulations to Derek Robbins with his "Framed Tower" & Jim Melville for "Anne Hathaway's Cottage", on the next page.



“Framed Tower” by Derek Robbins View of Blackpool Tower taken from underneath the pier and framed by the supports.



“Anne Hathaway’s Cottage” by Jim Melville

Taken through the Willow Circle. This is a twelve-roomed farmhouse where Anne Hathaway, the wife of William Shakespeare, lived as a child. It is located in Shottery about a mile west of Stratford-upon-Avon.

The exhibition of prints held twice a year by this group will be on display in Balsall Common Library from 4–18th July. Please visit it to see an interesting variety of photographs.

Jim Melville

Walking Cricket

Ian Morrey, the Walking Cricket group co-ordinator, has arranged two sessions for 2022, Tuesday 19th July and Tuesday 23rd August. The games will take place at the Balsall and Berkswell Hornets Sports Ground at the Triangle, Lavender Hall Lane, CV7 7BN starting at 1.30pm.

We trialled some sessions a couple of years ago and came up with a format which gives everyone a good chance to bat and bowl using a shortened wicket. It is of course a “walking” sport so not too much exertion is required.

All members are welcome to participate, ladies and gentlemen. More information is available on the website. Walking Cricket (balsallcommonu3a.org)

If you need any more information please contact ianmorrey@capacitate.co.uk telephone 07817 016928.

Ian Morrey

Editing the newsletter is better than being sent in 'ell! 😊

Queen's Platinum Jubilee

The Balsall Common Festival Committee organised a Picnic In The Park at Lavender Hall Park on Friday 3rd June 2022. Live entertainment on stage was presented by the Old Time Sailors and Chasing Deer. Many members of the u3a volunteered to help with stewarding duties.

With approximately 15 musicians, it was a tad crowded on stage for the Old Time Sailors, who put on a very entertaining performance. Still photos do not convey their high energy movements that reminded me of Madness (one of the best bands from the two-tone era). Being in photographer mode, I was only generally aware of their music, and there seemed to be plenty of the rhythms you hear from Irish jigs and reels. Between them they had a wide variety of musical instruments, at least one of which I have never seen before and would not know what to call it. They were performing on stage for around 50 minutes and appeared to be having a lot of fun, which was also very much enjoyed by the audience. The musicians all dress in clothing that would have been popular during the 19th century, and much of their music is from that era too. Both musically and visually they are quite a spectacle to watch.

The second band, Chasing Deer, are a trio of keyboard, guitar and drums, so they had plenty of room on stage. This is the third time I've seen Chasing Deer, though only the

singer/keyboard player is a permanent member of the band, whereas the guitarist and drummer have been different people each time. Dressed in casual current clothing, all three are perfectly competent musicians, and they performed their music very well.

Also a part of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, though not in Balsall Common:

Buckingham Palace Concert

Saturday 4th June, 7:30 to 10:30

The concert performed in front of Buckingham Palace was an amazing spectacle, not only for the thousands of spectators, but also for the potentially huge TV audience. It appeared as a highly professional and slick extravaganza, with a continuous stream of A-list performers, who each had just a few minutes before the next on different parts of the mammoth stage. As darkness fell, we were treated to superb light displays and video clips all projected onto the facade of Buckingham Palace behind the stage. Then in full darkness there were miraculous light displays in mid air above Buckingham Palace that astounded the audience. How did they do that? The answer is drones. Well done to everyone involved in the artistic designs of the images as well as the people who figured out how to co-ordinate the controlling of so many drones perfectly.

*Some people make things happen;
some people watch things happen;
some people wonder what happened!*

The Photographs:

Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in Lavender Hall Park,
3rd June:



The audience waiting for the live music to start; photo by John Bolt



In the beer tent; photo by John Bolt



A few of the Old Time Sailors; photo by John Bolt



Our u3a gazebo, sheltering Robert, Kim and Juliet; photo by John Bolt

(more Lavender Hall Park photos on next page)



"Dew Drop"
photo by Kim Hathrell.

Committee member Mike Fairbrother, having just enjoyed eating a soft ice cream cone in Lavender Hall Park.

Fascinating fact:

Dew Drop Inn is a popular name for a pub, there are several, not only around the UK but also in the USA. And there's a book called *Holiday at the Dew Drop Inn* by Eve Garnett. Though the only Dew Drop in(n) Balsall Common is on the tip of Mike's nose.



The Old Time Sailors;
photo by Robert Zhilmor

Chasing Deer;
photo by Robert Zhilmor



There may be more photos from this event on the website soon.

Harper Fields Care Home Jubilee Concert, 4th June:



Our u3a Swing Division, at Harper Fields



A special guest enjoying the band at Harper Fields.



Matthew on the right path, at Harper Fields.

Balsall Common u3a

Dinner and 'Dance'

To celebrate 40 years of the u3a movement



Saturday 24th September 2022

St Peter's Hall, Holly Lane, Balsall Common

Doors open 7.15pm Carriages at 10.15pm

Entertainment by

The Prime Numbers Band



Tables of 6

Come as a table of 6 or join a table on the night

Open to all our members (plus one guest per member)

Tickets cost £12.50 per person

Ticket includes a fish and chip supper



Payment by bank transfer (preferably)

Members who wish to pay by bank transfer, please contact
our treasurer to ask for bank account details:

treasurer@balsallcommonu3a.org

**Payment to be referenced with your Initials,
Surname, Dance and number of tickets**

**Payment should be based on the number of tickets
required @ £12.50 per ticket**

Alternatively, payment by cheque
at the Core meeting on the 7th July.

A table of 6 can be reserved by providing a lead name and payment totalling £75
Payment will be acknowledged within 5 days by David Thomas
Treasurer@balsallcommonu3a.org

**Tickets are limited and on a
first come first served basis!**

Please bring your own drinks, glasses, cutlery and plates.
Please help the committee by
taking away your own rubbish.

I've never seen a purple cow
I never hope to see one
But I can tell you any how
I'd rather see than be one!

If you know of any member who is ill or in need of assistance, please contact a committee member or group co-ordinator.

If you have any information you'd like to share in the next Sentinel, please email to
editor@balsallcommonu3a.org no later than
Thursday 28th July 2022.