



# Chair's message November 2022



The October news has been dominated by political and financial turbulence and yet another change of PM! So let's move swiftly on to the matters of u3a!!

It was good once again to catch up with the Ramblers group and enjoy a pleasant walk and lunch in — Wootton Wawen — thanks to Geoff Kennedy for leading. Don't forget to look out for the next walks on the website.

At our October Core Meeting our Guest Speaker, Roger Bishop, gave an excellent presentation (supported by excellent photography) on the History and Heritage of Canals.

## Group Activities:

### Gardening

In December we will be visiting an old local favourite — Baddesley Clinton on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December at 2.00 p.m., hopefully the house will be decorated for Christmas. This will be a self-drive visit and pay or use your National Trust card to gain entry.

We are planning visits for next year. This is your group and I would like to hear what you would like to do. Two members suggested a visit to Thenford Arboretum and Gardens, a site of national importance near Banbury. They already have tickets on sale for their spring open day on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023 priced at £16 per person. Coach costs (from Olton Friary) would likely be £20 to £25 per person so £40 per person in total.

Several requests have been made to visit RHS Wisley near Woking, Surrey. Entry for a group is likely to be in the region of £15–20 per person and coach costs would be £20 to £25 so again, £40 per person. If enough members think this is of interest, we will run this in June or July 2023.

If you are interested in any of the above, please let Rob Carmichael know (via [oltonu3a76rob@gmail.com](mailto:oltonu3a76rob@gmail.com) ). Do let him have your ideas for trips near or far so that the group can plan for 2023 — mention that you are a member of Balsall Common u3a.

Note: Our Groups Co-ordinator, Juliet Hancox is currently taking some time away from u3a following a family bereavement. In her absence, myself or a member of the Committee will step in and answer any enquiries.

## Publicity:

Our Display Board (on view at our monthly Core Meetings) has been updated and enhanced (a special thanks to Peter Calver for his work) and is now on show

for a month in the foyer of Balsall Common Library. Please feel free to take a look and tell your friends and family about it! Discussions are in progress to display u3a material in our local surgery.

The Winter edition of the Bugle Magazine will be dropped through your doors later this month. Once again, our u3a should be featuring prominently.

If you have u3a news to report please contact our Publicity Officer, Judy Hornigold via [judyh1@hotmail.com](mailto:judyh1@hotmail.com)

## Forthcoming Events:

Our members have kindly been invited to a Christmas Party! Our u3a Swing Division Band are playing at the Coventry u3a Christmas Party at 2.00 pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December at the Standard Triumph Club, Herald Avenue, Canley (just the other side of the big Sainsburys from Tile Hill). Tickets are £10 which includes a buffet with drinks available from the bar. I am going to support the band and I hope that some of you can join me! Please contact Nick Carter via 01676 535694 or [bigband@balsallcommonu3a.org](mailto:bigband@balsallcommonu3a.org) for full details.

As you know, we share a great relationship with Olton & District u3a and they have cordially invited our members to their Monthly Quiz at Olton Friary. The next one is Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November at 1.30 p.m. and the cost is £3 per person. Teams of 3 to 4 are randomly sorted on arrival. I went to the last one and was made very welcome. Subject to it not clashing with a local u3a

activity, I hope that a few of you can join me in attending. Please contact Carol Oakden via [caroloakden@gmail.com](mailto:caroloakden@gmail.com) — some Olton members recently supported our Dance/Supper so let's reciprocate!

A little further ahead, the Balsall Common Festival Committee will be organising a Picnic in the Park event to mark the Coronation of King Charles. In an attempt to avoid poor weather they have delayed the occasion until Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2023. It is likely that our u3a will once again be invited to help with stewarding. As soon as more details are available we will publish them.

And finally ... the next Core Meeting will be on Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November in St Peters Hall at 2.00 pm when our Guest Speaker will be Mike Hinton whose subject is "A day in the life of a District Park Ranger". It should be fascinating and we look forward to Mike's talk.

For details on the above, all Group activities and other information please refer to our website [balsallcommonu3a.org.uk](http://balsallcommonu3a.org.uk)

In the meantime enjoy u3a and do continue to support our Interest Groups and to check the website, [balsallcommonu3a.org](http://balsallcommonu3a.org)

Enjoy u3a and LEARN, LAUGH and LIVE!!

Best wishes,

*Matthew Stephens*

Imagine an imaginary menagerie manager managing an  
imaginary menagerie. 😊

## New Groups!

Two of our members have kindly volunteered to help to launch new groups:

### Classical Music Appreciation

Gwen and Ray Sands wish to help start a Classical Music Appreciation group — this would be excellent as we successfully operated such a group until relatively recently. It is envisaged that a house equipped with a suitable CD Player would host the group. If the interest is there the Committee will consider any requests for the funding of any necessary equipment. Would those members interested please contact Gwen via [gwensands6@gmail.com](mailto:gwensands6@gmail.com) or 01676 545838.

### Folk Dancing

Peter Hopwood recently moved across to us from Daventry u3a where he ran a very successful Folk Dancing group. It would be necessary to hire a small hall and with the right support and level of interest there is no reason why we cannot establish such a group here. Would those members interested please contact Peter via [p.hopwood313@gmail.com](mailto:p.hopwood313@gmail.com) or 07548 330741.

## Badminton

The Badminton group meets on Mondays, 1pm to 3pm, at the XCEL Leisure Centre, Mitchell Ave, Coventry, CV4 8DY.

The dates for November and December 2022 are:

07/11/2022    14/11/2022    21/11/2022  
                  28/11/2022    05/12/2022  
12/12/2022    Then a break until January

*Ernie Taylor*

## Family History

The next family history meeting is 21<sup>st</sup> November.

*Robert Farmer*

Many an anemone sees an enemy anemone. 😊

# Painting & Art Group

Here are four examples of the art being created in our Painting & Art group:



*Cecilia Lewison*

## Philosophy

The brief notice we entered into the Sentinel attracted three members to come to the Philosophy group, which we considered quite a success. Of course, we now wait to see if they keep coming!

*Mike Watkinson*

## Photography

Members of the Photography group continue to have images selected for both the u3a Eye and u3a Found in Nature.

### **u3a Eye:**

Congratulations to Angela Reid whose "Celebrating The Pumpkin!" photo was selected for the theme "Celebration".



A new season to celebrate, and always find the sight of a bright orange pumpkin amongst the foliage a delightful sign of a plentiful harvest to come. Of course pumpkins come in all shapes and sizes!

Since its inception, there have been 44 topics and 13 of our members between them have had 55 images chosen — a great achievement for this group.

## u3a Photography Initiatives News Article

A few months ago I was asked by Katie Hull, the u3a Learning Officer, to write a short article about our photography group which might feature on the u3a website. Imagine my surprise when I received the following email from her this week:

I know it's been a long time since I first got in touch, but our learning news article about u3a photography has finally been published on our website. Please do have a read here, and share with your group members and contributors: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/news/learning-news/photography-initiatives>

Thank you all for your contribution to this fantastic article, showcasing the wonderful photography talents of the u3a movement. If you follow this link, it will take you to 6 photographs from 6 u3a photography groups. You can then read more about each group's activities. The article for Balsall Common reads:

"The u3a initiative arrived at an opportune time during the Covid-19 lockdown thus providing members of Balsall

Common u3a Photography group with the ideal opportunity to become involved and creative during this strange time, as well as enabling them to reach a wider audience with their work.

This group has met since the inception of Balsall Common u3a in 2006. At the monthly meeting of the photography group, a photo topic is chosen and members' images (printed or projected) are either peer reviewed or assessed by an external judge. The theme for the u3a Eye is also announced. When the addition of "Found in Nature" was added this year, it gave us further impetus for participation.

Members have enjoyed the challenges set and to date eleven of us have had our images selected. They have all been placed on the Balsall Common u3a website for everyone to view.

As one of the group who has had images selected, it is impossible for me to attempt to select a favourite photograph as they are all winners. The themes selected offer interesting and sometimes intriguing challenges and The Photography group always looks forward to meeting them." Congratulations to Janet Jordan, Kaushalya Rihal & Jim Melville whose images are shown below:



Janet Jordan



Kaushalya Rihal



Jim Melville

*Jim Melville*

The rampant rider raider wore wider waders while risking  
whalloping waves. 😊

## Out and About Events

I am pleased to inform you that the Out and About Group has been reinstated and although still being co-ordinated by Peter Calver, he now has the support and assistance of a small committee — Juliet Hancox, Judy Hornigold and Angela Reid.

The purpose of the Group is to visit local places of interest (by public transport or self-drive) as well as coach excursions. This group is open to all members of the Balsall Common u3a and all activities will be advertised to the whole membership.

If you have any suggestions for visits, either local or afar, please email the Co-ordinator, or telephone 01676 535318.

There are still places available for our visit on 24<sup>th</sup> November

November 24<sup>th</sup>                      Guided tour of **Acme Whistle Factory** — Hockley, Birmingham. Longer-serving u3a members may remember a Core meeting talk by the Managing Director of this company a few years ago. The tour will cost £14.50, last for about 2 hours and include tea/coffee and biscuits at the end. The start time has now been changed to 11:00 am which will allow participants to use public transport either using a senior bus/rail card or at a lower rate on the train / tram to the venue. Please note the factory was built in 1870 and has a number of floors, but no lift.

There is one place left on the following visit — first come first served .

December 13<sup>th</sup>                      Evening visit to **Luminate Coombe**, Coombe Abbey Coventry. A spectacular, illuminated trail, full of wonder and intrigue, to delight and enthrall your senses. The illuminated trail is approximately one mile long and (depending on how quickly you walk through) will take circa 60–90 minutes to complete. Please Note: They will not have 'traditional festive' decorations at Luminate and Father Christmas will not be there — he'll be far too busy getting everything ready at the North Pole (according to their website). This visit will be in the dark and outside sturdy footwear is recommended. There is a café on site. Cost is £17.20 each and the visit will start at 6:30pm.

Payment details will be advised. We can accept cheques payable to Balsall Common u3a or bank transfer.

If you wish to be included in either of these trips please contact [petercalver@outlook.com](mailto:petercalver@outlook.com)

*Peter Calver*

During the energy crisis,  
the light at the end of the tunnel has been turned off. 😊

## Energy Crisis

Many of us are concerned about the current increases in the costs of energy, and wondering what we can do about it. Generating an equivalent amount of energy at home is neither practical nor financially viable. The only sensible way to reduce our energy costs, and also help the environment, is to use less energy. We can achieve that, without feeling cold and without spending a fortune, by improving our thermal insulation.

By far the easiest and least expensive way to improve thermal insulation is to start with our clothing. If we wear winter clothing indoors, we can accept a lower temperature in our homes and turn down the heating or even turn it off all together. Energetic physical activities, such as keep-fit exercises or dancing can generate internal body heat.

There are simple ways to improve the thermal insulation of our homes, such as basic draft-proofing our doors and

windows. Close your curtains on all windows apart from any on the sunny-side of your house while the sun is shining. Install curtains on the front and back doors of your house. If you're going to redecorate soon, line your walls with polystyrene (can be bought in rolls from DIY stores) and paste your new wall paper on top of the polystyrene. All these can be done by any reasonably practical home-owner, so you don't need to pay professionals to do it for you.

Costing a bit more, but well worth considering, is loft insulation to reduce heat loss through your roof. If you have a detached, semi-detached, end terrace or corner house with lots of external brick wall, then consider external wall insulation, but that is much more expensive. Similarly triple-glazed windows are better than double. In the very long run a ground-source heat pump will be better than a gas boiler, but it will take a lot of years to make up for the very high installation cost.

Another way to reduce energy consumption is to find out which of your household appliances use the most energy, and consider whether you really need to use them, or can you find other ways to achieve what they do for you. Do some research into how people who live off-grid, such as on narrow boats etc, live reasonably well without having any of those high-energy appliances.

Individual solar panels can be bought from caravan and camping accessory retailers, they are not too expensive, they don't need to be installed by professionals, and

along with a rechargeable 12 volt battery they can provide the electricity for your, phone, laptop, portable TV or DVD player, and possibly other similar small appliances. Just position the panel in any convenient location where it can receive bright daylight and preferably direct sunshine.

For any individual household that can reduce energy consumption, the obvious benefit is lower fuel bills. If the majority of houses in the country can do the same, then there are more benefits: reduced demand on the national grid which in turn reduces the likelihood of power cuts and also reduces the need for the country to import energy from abroad, helps the country to achieve its net zero targets which in turn helps the environment to remain hospitable for longer so that young children alive today can hope to reach the same age as we are at now.

*Robert Zhilmor*

## Halloween

During Halloween  
our office  
will be manned  
by a skeleton staff



A flea and a fly in a flue,  
Were imprisoned, so what could they do?  
Said the fly, "Let us flee!"  
"Let us fly," said the flea,  
And they flew through a flaw in the flue.



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](mailto:editor@balsallcommonu3a.org) no later than Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022.