

SPIRE U3A



THE SIXTH IRREGULAR NEWSHEET



'OUR ICONIC SPIRE'

BY RICHARD
TEMLETT - DI
PHOTOGRAPHY
GROUP

**“Dont miss
out: join Spire
u3a Facebook
Group where
timely
messages are
posted”**

Message from the Chairman

I am so looking forward to seeing you all at the February Monthly Meeting, **Monday 8th.**

The meeting will open at **10am** to allow you to see your friends, drink your coffee and make use of the Zoom Chat function. When Officers and Group Leaders have given out any notices we will welcome our guest speaker Bob Mizon. Bob, a familiar face at Spire meetings, will be telling us about *The Moon, our useful neighbour*.

My plan is to arrange regular speakers at our monthly meetings from now on. Please make a note on your calendar for the second Monday of each month.

Best wishes, *John Holt*

Editorial

HAVE you noticed? Sunset is getting later and hours of daylight are increasing. Our monthly meetings have resumed, the interest groups are finding ways of continuing activities, some members have already had their initial vaccination. It is all looking promising. Spire u3a is thinking positively. So whatever the weather/virus/government has in store for us the next news sheet will be *The Spring Edition*. Whoopee!

Above all, let us keep in mind what u3a is all about - and why we all joined in the first place - to "Make the most of life once you're no longer in full time work by exploring new ideas, skills and interests."

The key word there would seem to be 'new.' As things are, we find ourselves living with restrictions, having to be extra sensible and find new ways of filling our time. I am told that research has shown that people with good social networks stay healthier and live longer. Meanwhile, I am looking forward to seeing you all at our next zoom opportunity; links are given at the end of this news sheet.

Now read on to discover what you can get involved in and what other members have been doing.
Maureen E Frost

LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE



CITIZEN SCIENCE - the RSPB Garden Bird Watch.

The RSPB provides you with all you need, including advice on identifying species:
<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/everything-you-need-to-know-about-big-garden-birdwatch/>

PUZZLES

With general knowledge or so-called 'Quick' crosswords you either know the answer, or you don't. Sometimes you can look it up or is that cheating? But cryptic crosswords are different. This site claims we can learn to solve them.

www.learncrypticcrosswords.co.uk

THE INTEREST GROUPS

WALKING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

You never know exactly what you are going to come across on a walk in the countryside. Leader Colin Seago, always checks out the route beforehand but flowers can bloom, fauna can reveal itself and changing weather conditions can all make a difference. If there is a convenient bus route they go there. On one occasion Colin led the group through the village of Lover, near Redlynch. There were signs of romance everywhere, hearts and flowers all over the place. It was February 14, St Valentines Day.

“Normally I sort out a walk and announce it at the monthly meeting for the following Thursday - what bus, where and when we are going,” said Colin. “We try to go out on one bus route and back on another. For example, we can go out to the Chalke Valley on the 25 bus, walk over the Downs and come back on the 29 Shaftesbury bus.”

This avoids leaving cars by the roadside and makes good use of bus passes but, at the moment, travelling as a group on buses is not the right thing to do. Meanwhile, Colin is still out walking the countryside, researching routes for the future - something to look forward to.

For this month we have set up a zoom session, on Thursday February 18 at 10.30am so we can catch up with each other's news and see a short film of a walk in Dorset.

The zoom details are.....

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87536071389?pwd=Q2lRdG9yNmM3ejhuaThEQkFPTVZTZz09>

Meeting ID: 875 3607 1389

Passcode: 269973

GEOLOGY

The Group has had its first zoom meeting under the competent leadership of Stuart Robson.

Members welcomed fellow enthusiasts from Devizes, looked at Geological maps and discussed a programme for the coming months. Future topics will include gemstones and New Zealand.

Contact Stuart for more information.

stuart.robson6@btinternet.com

CANASTA

Members met with Christine Hill in January. After a long break they had a lot of catching up to do. They will meet again on zoom on Monday February 22 at 2.30pm.

LUNCH CLUB

Organised by Judy Jeffrey, Lunch Club generally attracts about a dozen diners: “We choose a venue every month and go off and have a nice lunch somewhere. When we have had our meal we all have a chance to say where we would like to go next time.”

With lockdowns and the closure of eating places in the last few months it has not been possible to operate as usual but some hardy members did get together informally for a suitably distanced picnic in a public open space as late as November.

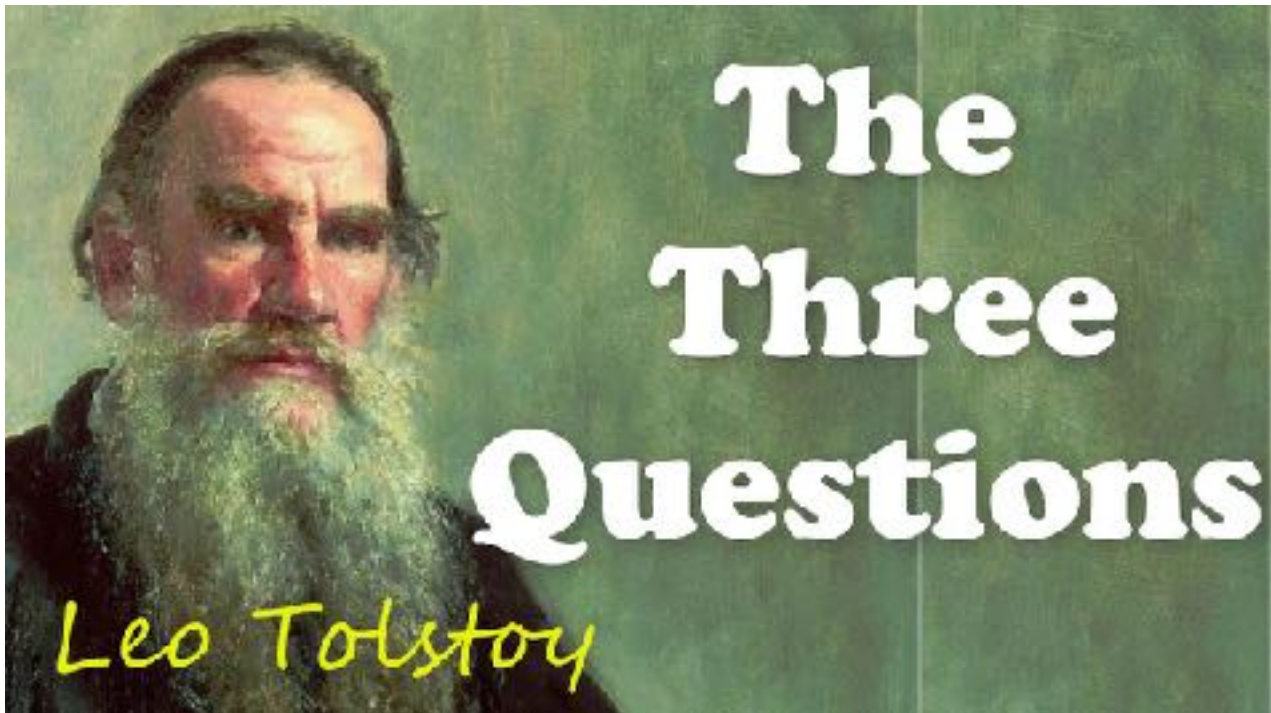
Judy said: “I am looking forward to getting back together as soon as it is viable.”

PHOTOGRAPHY

With the help of technology the Practical Photography and Digital Imaging Groups have met on their customary Friday mornings throughout. More recently the group has forged links with other u3a photographers, from as far away as London and Australia, joining the conversation. Leader, Peter Read has set regular ‘homework’ to provide a focus for the sessions such as the ‘Photos of Bench Marks’ project, getting to grips with new software and particular DI techniques. For details of upcoming meetings see the website

<http://www.salisburyu3a.org.uk/SPIRE/SpireDIPhotoTimetable.html>

OCCASIONAL BOOK CLUB [Open to all Spire folk].



Our first story was *Foxcastle* by Sylvia Townsend Warner. Read it here

<https://www.scottishfield.co.uk/culture/books/an-exclusive-short-story-for-scottish-field-readers/>

Your response might be to do with the story or something you have discovered about the writer. A paragraph, or two, a few bullet points or a sketch are all acceptable. Please send your response to townpump@hotmail.co.uk asap, please, so we can share our thoughts.

Warner was only 17 when our next author died, Leo Tolstoy, aged 82. They could not be more different, nor could these stories. But what do you think? Again send your response to townpump@hotmail.co.uk, please, this time by the end of February. At the same time you are invited to suggest an author for next time.

The Three Questions is available to read on YouTube (turn the sound down) or as an audiobook. Click the picture above or go to <https://youtu.be/fbw30o6EOP8>

CREATIVE WRITING

The challenge in the Winter News sheet was to write something that made use of 6 particular words. Mary Mitchell quickly came up with this poem. Well done, Mary.

Was it a cry?
That sound in the night.
A thin PLAINTIVE call
A noise so slight
That it floated away in the trembling dark.

I unbarred the door
And lifted the latch.
Peered into the gloom.
And yes, I could catch
A glimmer of RUSSET against the trees bark.

My WHISPERING thoughts
 Urged caution and care.
 But I climbed the old STILE
 To see what was there.
 And a stray shaft of moonlight betrayed the dim mark

Of the sight at my feet
 Of a fox in a snare.
 There came a REPEAT
 Of that wild piercing cry
 As I bent down to unshackle the blood sodden arc

From a limb that was shattered.
 But night turned to day
 And Winter to Spring
 New JOYS came my way-
 Fox feeding by doorstep- gone memories so stark.



The same 6 words were employed in this short tale:

Fed up with the **plaintive**, repetitive chatter Grandma planned a distraction.
 Little Megan thought the apple cake was delicious. She forgot that she had no-one to play with, no pet kitten, nothing to do, nowhere to go: "This is the best cake ever, Grandma."
 "The secret is the apples," explained Grandma, "Egremont **Russet** is a special variety. Would you like to make another cake like it to take home with you?"
 First Megan had to fetch the apples.
 The tree was at the end of **Whispering** Lane.
 Megan knew the way, straight across the meadow, round the pond and over the **stile** at the top of the hill.
 And there it was, a modest tree in the hedgerow, laden with fruit.
 Megan soon filled her bag with apples and spent the rest of the afternoon happily baking with Grandma.
 "You are one of the greatest **joys** of my life," thought Grandma, waving goodbye to both girl and cake. "Maybe you will be back tomorrow for a **repeat** performance. I do hope so." - MEF

SOMETHING TO DO

WEEKLY TALKS

Mirthy offer live talks from the comfort of your living room. Mirthy say their mission is to help over 50s remain active, social and productive, reimagining retirement: "Not only will this new approach provide a much-needed social antidote in this period of self-isolation, but will entertain and inform our community."

Topics cover everything from gardening and travel to history and show business.

Two talks are currently offered each week. The free one is on a Thursday afternoon. Speakers may be cruise ship lecturers, professional entertainers or just people who like to share what they know. Talks last about 40 minutes.

You need to register separately for each talk. Then look out for an email with the link you need from Alex Ramamurthy. [It may go into your spam folder or junk box]. If you miss the talk you have registered for you cannot catch up with it later.

<https://mirthy.co.uk/talks/>

GET CREATIVE WITH WORDS

January, Nettles, Puzzle, Machinery, Chopping, Clearly.

These are the 6 words for this month's creative writing exercise; all from chapter 5 of a certain book.

See what you can make of them!

Send your efforts to townpump@hotmail.co.uk

Then we will tell you where we found these six words.

PREPARE FOR TIPPLE TIME

January Tipple Time was a Show 'n' Tell session. We began with exchanging vaccination news and moved on to sharing what we have been up to - knitting fancy cushion covers from oddments of wool, making colourful blankets for newborns, baking shortbread and loaves, repurposing old elm woodwork, photographing curious items, labelling old albums and linking them to the family tree, cross-stitching projects, sharing the joy of young relatives & recommending some talks and TV programmes that we have enjoyed.

February Tipple Time will focus on our favourite foods, what our mums used to give us, the best/worst meal ever, what we like to cook, cake, and more CAKE.

[See zoom link at the end.]

DISCOVER LOCAL HISTORY

Did you know that in May 1213 the British Fleet of some 500 ships (cogs and galleys), under Salisbury's William Longespée, stumbled on a French invasion fleet of 1,700 (probably exaggerated) ships and a large amount of stores? Some 100 ships, stores and harbour were destroyed and 300 ships captured. Once again we were saved from becoming part of France. The victory is called after Damme which was the Flemish port for Bruges. Why was such a fantastic outcome not taught at school? Is it because it does not fit in with King John being a 'bad king'.

This nugget of information, from a Magna Carta volunteer and archive researcher at the cathedral can be found, along with many other gems, at

<https://www.jot-and-tittle.com>



SIGN UP for Jot & Tittle's fascinating newsletter here <https://www.jot-and-tittle.com>

NATIONAL u3a NEWSLETTER

Head Office has just issued the 40th edition: "We have a really engaged a large newsletter community which currently has 29,629 people signed up to receive it. Can you help us reach 30,000 subscribers? There is a serious point too. The newsletter has been an important way for us to all stay connected over this time."

You can save Jackie, our hardworking secretary, a job by subscribing directly so she does not have to forward it to you. Please SUBSCRIBE here.....

<https://u3a.org.uk/newsletter>

Things native english speakers know but don't know they know:

Adjectives in English absolutely have to be in this order: opinion-size-age-shape-color-origin-material-purpose Noun. So you can have a lovely little old rectangular green French silver whittling knife. But if you mess with that word order in the slightest you will sound like a maniac. It's an odd thing that every English speaker uses that list. But almost none of us could write it out. And as size comes before color, green great dragons can't exist.

ZOOMS

SPIRE MONTHLY MEETING & COFFEE TIME

Monday February 8th from 10am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89280275252?pwd=ejNzd2dFOXl0WnZOSXVicU5tK3Rxdz09>

Meeting ID: 892 8027 5252

Passcode: 992811

TIPPLE TIME

Friday February 19th at 6pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86725675768?pwd=RjMxRGhvQ0pzYUd4NjhHT1hYNmV6UT09>

Meeting ID: 867 2567 5768

Passcode: 430899

