

SPIRE U3A



THE SEVENTH IRREGULAR NEWSHEET



**'SPRINGTIME IN
SALISBURY' by PETER READ
- DI Photography Group**

**March monthly
meeting:
Colin van Geffen
on '*Lucy
Houston, The
Lady who saved
the nation.*'**

Message from the Chairman

IT was so good to see so many of you at the February Monthly meeting. We will follow the same format in April and for the next few months. Well done, everyone, for persevering with zoom. The committee is keeping the situation under review but, subject

to government guidelines, advice from Public Health officials and any restrictions on using the Memorial Hall, the earliest we can possibly all meet in person will be July 12th. Some Interest Groups may be tempted to meet outdoors earlier than this but please seek advice from u3a head office first and stay strictly within the government roadmap rules.

Meanwhile, it is good to see that an increasing number of Interest Groups are finding ways to function in the circumstances. I look forward to seeing you all on **Monday 8th March at 10am** for what promises to be a fascinating illustrated talk. The zoom link is listed on the last page, or look out for an email reminder.

Best wishes

John Holt

Editorial

You have had your pancakes, I hope. March is a month for saints days - St David, St Patrick - Mothering Sunday, BST and signs of Spring. The snowdrops, primroses and hellebores in my garden have been trying their best but what I really like to see are the celandines so bright and cheerful.

We have also spotted some robins which seem to be pairing up - another hopeful sign - so by the time this newsletter is out of date winter will be right out of fashion.

And there is something else we have to get excited about. The Reading Agency has chosen Spire u3a to receive an allocation of new books to mark World Book Night in April. I will reveal the title in the next news sheet and explain exactly how the books will be distributed. **Just make sure that you renew your subscription promptly to ensure you are in with a chance of receiving one.**

We have an amazing mix of news for you, interspersed with things to do and activities to enjoy. As I write, the weather is damp and the wind is unpleasant, but I still wrap up and go out for a bit of exercise every day. There is not much enjoyment in it but there is some. And as I walk, my own words come back to me - the words I used to say to my children - *if you don't put any effort into it you won't get anything out of it!*

Easy to say, of course, but still as true as ever in the times we live in.

Lastly, a big, BIG, thank you to everyone who has contributed to this news sheet. It is your efforts that turn it into a fascinating read for everyone; keep it coming.

Maureen E Frost

“An old lady said to me years ago: If you don't learn something every day it is a day wasted.”

- PAT CARLEY

From the Membership Secretary.....

A MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Currently Spire U3A has 160 members

We welcome 2 new members who joined in 2020: Shella Miller and John Elliott and one (so far) in 2021: Janette Ecob.

Sadly 2 longstanding members have passed away Christopher Penfold and Margot Wilson.

Although we are unable to meet face to face we have more frequent newsletters, an active Facebook Group and regular Zoom meetings.

10 members do not have internet access but they are kept up to date by phone contact with those of us who are on line.

Regular copies of TAM magazine are sent from head office to all members.

Subscriptions remain at £10 per year payable on 1st April.

Mary Robson

LEARN, LAUGH, LIVE



Your regional Trustees and Team are here to support you. We know that despite everyone's best efforts, things have been challenging for many of us and there are times we may need some extra support.

This leaflet has advice, links, tips and resources to help keep us all connected, active and learning together. Whether we connect online or face to face (rules allowing) when the lockdown eases or a blend of the

two, we hope the ideas in this leaflet support us in growing a strong movement. No member should be left behind so please keep in touch with your regional trustee and team www.u3a.org.uk/board. You can find all the resources in this leaflet at www.u3a.org.uk/member-link

Stay safe and well and we look forward to talking with many of you in the coming months.

Member Link is aimed precisely at you and me.

A copy has been forwarded to all Spire members.

It bears re-reading whenever you have a spare five minutes as it is jam-packed with ideas to keep body and mind active.

Overactive spam filters may mean that your copy is languishing in your Junk bin or Spam folder. However, all the information can be downloaded here

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/component/edocman/member-link/u3a-member-link-leaflet-pdf-colour?Itemid=>

Member Link is a timely initiative to support u3as and their members to keep talking and learning together. Member link collates in one place all the advice, tips and resources to help us stay connected.

Support for u3a Members	
Connecting Offline Telephone Trees – One to one phone calls from dedicated members. You can see how Newcastle u3a used telephone trees to support its members on our blog Sources Phone In Conferencing – You don't have to be online to join in zoom – you can call in. WhatsApp – Talk on the phone with other members using WhatsApp groups. Find out more WhyPay? – Offers a free telephone conference service for the price of a telephone call. Visit our how to guidance Buddy Up with those online – Members can join others who have internet connections. Why not Volunteer to be a Buddy in your region? Contact your Trustee Penfriends – Write regularly to other members by post in your u3a or across u3as. Round robin Letters – Write a letter – send it to a member who will add a bit and pass it to a member who will do the same. The chain will grow. Print and Post – A newsletter to someone not online. Sign up to National Newsletter which has a bitesize version to print and post. Helpline – u3a has partnered with Independent Age Helpline for confidential guidance on care & support, money, benefits and health. Freephone line on 0800 319 678 ClickSilver – Provides telephone mentors to support people to get online.	Connecting Online National learning programme – Join one of our many initiatives, competitions or challenges – creative, history, maths, crafts and so much more. Find out more Subject Advisers – Get in touch with our Subject Advisers for their advice and ideas on interest groups. Events and Talks – We have so many interesting Talks and Events Find out about online platforms Online Workshops and Tutorials Sign up for Zoom Tutorials or book bespoke workshops to help with running your u3a. Digital Eagles – Access to Barclays Digital Wings tutorials for 'How to session on digital skills and information'. Use code 'U3A' National Newsletter – Keep up to date with what's going on across the movement – Sign up to receive it directly to your email every month. Sources – Our u3a blog has interesting articles to read from across the movement. Why not send us an article about what you are doing and learning in lockdown? Sources Trust u3a – Join Trust u3a – for access to online learning groups. Research and Shared Learning – Find out more including the High Street Project Time on your hands? Join in the conversation on our Social Media – Join us on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook and find out what the movement and wider community are talking about. Or why not join Keeping In Touch or our forums? – Join the conversation on our closed Facebook group Keeping In Touch or the digital forums u3a Radio Podcast – Listen to our radio podcast every month to hear stories from across the movement. Volunteer to give a Talk? – Why not volunteer to be a speaker and give a talk? info@u3a.org.uk Contact us – The Third Age Trust is always here for you. Contact us with any issues. info@u3a.org.uk 0208 466 6139

We are thrilled to let you know that Spire's application to the World Book Night giveaway this year has been successful. We shall be joining a number of other organisations in distributing books to members and promoting reading for pleasure.

THE INTEREST GROUPS

WALKING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

This Group met for the first time on zoom in February and had a fine time exchanging news and generally talking about walking and the great outdoors.

The meeting lasted about an hour and included a short film of a walk from Swanage to Corfe Castle. This prompted a number of anecdotes, among them - grounding someone else's boat on Old Harry Rocks and some Gents who mistook the Ladies facilities for castle dungeons. Whoops and whoops again!

This Group will meet again on **Wednesday March 10** at 10.30am, when we hope to fulfil requests for films of walks in the Lake District and Hadrians Wall.

Look for a reminder email from Colin or use this link.....

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

Meeting ID: 875 3607 1389

Passcode: 269973

DRAWING AS A LANGUAGE

Originally known as **Drawing Tuition** this group has evolved into a group that looks at how and why drawings work as a form of communication. And not just drawings but other visual art-forms.

In normal times, this group meets in the home of one member who has the facility to summon up any artwork or historical picture for discussion. Leader Christopher Browne explained that most of the drawing is done as homework on a particular theme, material or style: everybody takes off in a different direction. The results are shared but not competitively.

Meetings often focus on art history or the works of a particular artist.

"We have got a lot out of it," said Christopher. And the group has remained active in lockdown.

"We had a meeting on zoom where we had to look at each others drawings by holding them up to the computer and discuss them as though we were seeing them on the table." Southampton City Art Gallery has a remarkably varied collection, comprising over 5,000 works and spanning eight centuries. The core, however, is British twentieth century and contemporary art. The Gallery is currently closed but tentative plans for a virtual visit on the **afternoon of March 10** are underway.

- Contact Christopher for confirmation/details.

PHOTOGRAPHY

On Friday 20th Feb I organised a Zoom meeting for the Practical Photography group. I invited my local members from Spire and Sarum. Additionally, I also invited members of the Mill Hill and Hadleigh u3a. So we had quite a jolly crowd.

I started by asking for contributions for the Homework that I set last month. This was to scrutinise the OS Archive map showing all the height benchmarks in the UK.

The first person to come forth was Elaine [MH u3a] and she showed us around Mill Hill and some benchmark photos. She found that it was an interesting way to change her normal daily walk. She had to look very carefully to find them. In some cases, they have vanished.

Then Peter Van Os found a lot of BM's in the Close. I was amazed that I had never seen them before despite being quite clear. Also on the Library and the Guildhall.

Terry found several BM's in Stapleford including one in a hedge known as a *Bullet BM*. There is a BM near the Pelican Inn that he found too.

Alan Frost found an amazing number of BM's from The Close, Exeter Street, Britford, Harnham Bridge, St Georges Church, St Nicholas Gate [Shown Above] and St Martins Church.

David Portwain [Hadleigh u3a] did not find any marks but we did see Hadleigh Castle. Ann Smith showed us her Transfer Prints of Venice.

I then went on to talk about Minimalist Photography and to this end I had a short video of the Windows of Fife and then some images were taken last week of minimal pictures. I took a number around All Saints Church and in Churchill Gardens.

I also wrote a memo of links that members can access on this topic. All this was videoed by Zoom; I uploaded it to YouTube [<https://youtu.be/q3ic4X0HBNA>]. So you can all see what fun everyone had for two hours on a wet Friday morning.

Peter Read DPAGB, LRPS



POETRY READING

"A good poem is a contribution to reality. The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it," so said Dylan Thomas.

Spire's Poetry Reading Group has not been able to meet much in the last twelve months but that is about to alter.

"We had at least one meeting outside in a garden on a lovely day," said Group Leader Beryl Paton. Soon it may be possible to do that again in groups limited to six but the limit on zoom is much bigger so **now is your chance to join.**

"Normally we sit round in a circle, in someone's house, and we read poetry sometimes on a topic, sometimes works of a particular poet and sometimes just what we like. We go round the circle and people read their bits."

Between the poems there is an opportunity to say what comes to mind. Beryl says: "We put the world to rights, have a generally good discussion between friends and have a good time."

"I am not the person who knows the most about poetry but I love it."

The topic for the next meeting, on Thursday 18 March at 2.30pm, will be FREEDOM.

New members welcome.

The zoom details are

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81375819443?pwd=OHZnR3JmZmE3NjFwVTBvMGdpYXU0dz09>

Meeting ID: 813 7581 9443

Passcode: 433769

CANASTA, RECORDERS & GEOLOGY

Will all be meeting again in March, using the same zoom links as before. Look out for an email reminder from the Group Leader.

ALL YOUR OWN WORK

RESPONSES

TO THE FEBRUARY CREATIVE WRITING CHALLENGE

"It was Spring, but the weather occasionally had that chill which Mary remembered from JANUARY, when the MACHINERY in the barn was too cold to touch without thick gloves on. Soup was definitely on the menu for lunch today!

While CHOPPING the fresh NETTLES she had picked from behind the barn, she thought back on those very snowy days. Deep snow had lain everywhere, but particularly along the road from the farm to the village. The PUZZLE was, how could she collect her shopping from the local store. CLEARLY she couldn't drive, even in the landrover. She would have to walk in her very long boots.

She decided to enjoy her soup and then head off."

Jenny Collings

Yes, certainly 'a cold coming we had of it' and certainly 'in the very dead of winter'. 'The ways deep and the weather sharp'. But wise? Bearing gifts? Most definitely not! And that was the problem. Or would be if we survived to tell.

So this JANUARY we were knee deep in snow, with the sky lowering and leaden, threatening yet more to come and the wind freezing every painful breath.

Hard to believe just a few short months ago we were striding this self same bank by the self same line of pines, but then knee deep in sun soaked, bee drowsy NETTLES, full of optimism. Well, the ways of Nature may be a PUZZLE, but they do have a rhythm and a meaning, whereas those of men? Well, probably summed up as vices and virtues, with, on closer inspection, more of the former.

As if on a given signal, we staggered to a halt. The bank and tree line we'd been tracking petered out and the land fell away formlessly.

We peered down the sloping hillside into the gloom and finally, faintly, wind carried came the whirring of MACHINERY and in the distance a flickering, sputtering light.
 So, we're almost there. It was the right track. Could experience be called a virtue?
 We plough downwards, straining to steer a course towards the sound and light. And then the noise of an axe CHOPPING. Well! If willpower is also a virtue, then we could claim it in abundance after the journey we've had! The loggers camp comes CLEARLY now into our bleary, ice-crusted sight.
 But as for vices? And where are our mules laden down with trappers furs?
 Well, that's another story.

— — — —
 [The lines in quotes are from T S Eliot *Journey of the Magi*, which came into my mind with January.]

Mary Mitchell

RESPONSES TO OBC SHORT STORIES

Foxcastle Sylvia Townsend Warner

- A strange story by a most interesting writer.
- I hadn't heard the expression *Piling Pelion on Ossa* meaning piling a mountain on top of another – to make a challenging situation even more challenging.
- I also didn't know about Martinmas St Martin's day 11th November.
- 20 years ago the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society was founded to make her work better known.
- Last year Sylvia Townsend Warner's novel *Lolly Willows* was recommended for lockdown reading by the Guardian newspaper.
- One day I would like to read more about this author's life story

The Three Questions Leo Tolstoy

- Leo Tolstoy is regarded as one of the greatest writers of all time.
- The theme of this short story; doing the right action at the right time is thought provoking and contemporaneously relevant. The Three Questions has been adapted for children by Jon J Muth .
- This would work well to read together, or in a club, because the issues raised promote discussion.
- I was interested to read some of Tolstoy's succinct quotes on Google.

The most significant similarity was that both lead characters fell asleep as part of the plot.

I enjoyed both stories but I preferred *The Three Questions* because it made me think whereas Foxcastle made me concentrate.

Mary Robson



SOMETHING TO DO

CREATIVE WRITING

Author David Lodge says that 90% of the time nominally spent writing is actually spent reading: "You write a sentence - or, more likely, half a sentence. You pause to read what you have written. You cross out a word and substitute another."

After more words, more adjustments, changes and deletions you complete the paragraph, start another one and go through the whole process again. Whether it is a story, a bit of doggerel, a news sheet like this, a shopping list or a literary novel I reckon David Lodge has it about right.

That brings me on to our latest Creative Writing challenge.....

Something touches you, you can hear things. What is that smell? What are you peering at and what is that taste in your mouth? Describe where you are and what is going on.

Give your piece a title and send it to townpump@hotmail.co.uk, please, as soon as it is ready and by the end of March at the latest.

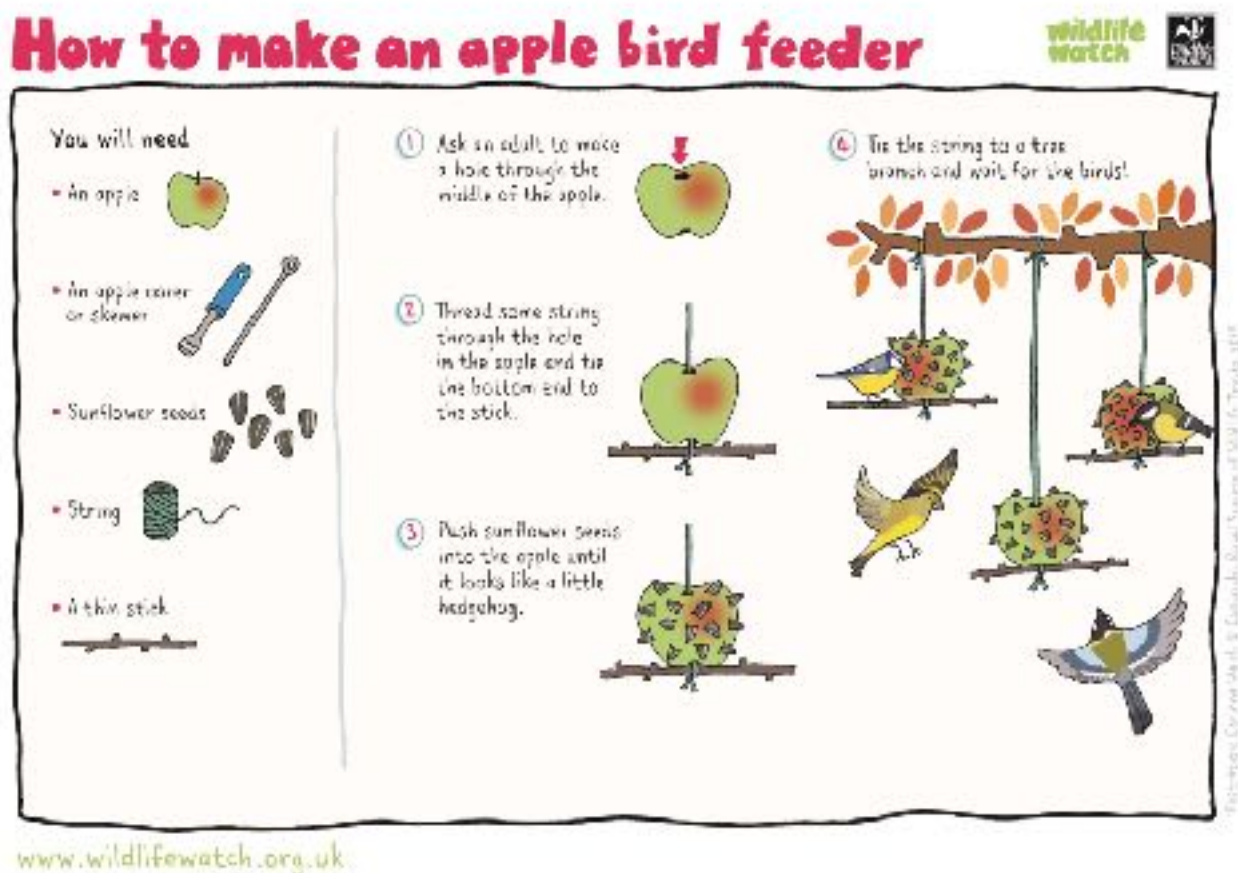
OBC - open to all

The Occasional Book Club recommended short story this month is *The Stranger* by Katherine Mansfield. A little longer than the stories that we have looked at before and more grounded in reality, it is a good example of the beauty of brevity.

Find it here -

<http://www.classicshorts.com/stories/TheStranger.html>

And when you have read it please send your thoughts or a snapshot of your illustration to townpump@hotmail.co.uk



PREPARE FOR TIPPLE TIME

People's choice of what to drink at 6pm on a Friday covers the whole range from milk to spirits but Christine definitely gets the prize for innovation and variety. And who knew that the topic of milk puddings could be so controversial? But all sorts of likes and dislikes came out when we discussed food last month.

Having waxed nostalgic about childhood meals and school dinners we settled on our topic for March: reminiscences - our own little stories from the past.

The zoom link is posted at the end.



JOIN OUR FACEBOOK

Spire u3a Facebook Group was created during Lockdown 2020 to enable members to keep in touch; Learn, Laugh, Live.

There are guidelines on the 'About' page of the site and several 'Admins' who will not hesitate to remove any ill-natured posts.....not that we expect them from our members.

Spire u3a is set up as a 'Private Group' so only members can see who's in the group and what they post, not the whole world. But it is 'Visible' so anyone can find this group.

Posts include news of Spire members, timely reminders of coming events, messages from the Chairman or Secretary, lovely photos and links to 'really interesting' things.

Spire news sheets are also filed there, in case you have mislaid one.

If you have not joined yet - there could not be a better time to do so.

DISCOVER LOCAL HISTORY

Jot & Tittle continues to fascinate. Issue 58 featured Sir Robert Hyde of Heale House in the Woodford Valley. The latest issue No 59 has an item on Salisbury in time of cholera - no, you would not have wanted to live in The Close then.

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

TAKE A LEARNING INITIATIVE

As we very slowly edge towards Spring, the u3a Learning Team will be launching new initiatives to celebrate the change in season while still learning and keeping inspired: "Make sure you carry on looking at [our learning pages](#) to find out what we have on offer. "The online talks are extremely popular and we continually release more spaces and workshops so please do keep checking back on [the events page](#)."

MUG UP ON ZOOM

<https://ilkeleyu3a.org/resources/Documents/MCoT/Membership%20documents/Advisory/Help%20for%20Zoom.pdf?>

ZOOM LINKS

SPIRE MONTHLY MEETING & COFFEE TIME

Monday March 8th from 10am

Colin van Geffen on *The Lady Who Saved The Nation*.

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

Meeting ID: 892 8027 5252

Passcode: 992811

TIPPLE TIME

Friday March 19th at 6pm

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

Meeting ID: 867 2567 5768

Passcode: 430899



