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### Chairman's Thoughts!



As I type we are “enjoying” 35 degree Celsius temperatures, with the phenomena of “tropical nights” with 20 degree plus temperatures, often being higher than normal day time thermometer readings!.

I for one do not respond well to these excessive temperatures, so my normal “Stay safe” message needs to be added”Stay Cool”

Elsewhere in the Newsletter you will find details of how to vote in the forthcoming AGM, we need to go down this route as the Plaza in Covid mode will only accommodate 22 people and is not likely to see any change to that before 2021.

Your committee staged a virtual Plaza meeting last month and it was of considerable interest to those who logged in, there will be no virtual meeting as this would have been the month of the Summer Social at Thrapston Sailing Club,

We will hold further “Zoom Plaza” meetings with speakers so can I urge you as members to join in with these electronic meetings so that our U3A continues to function and we can meet as least as faces on a computer screen.

Reminder the photographic and poetry competitions close online on 21<sup>st</sup> August

As we move on with what is called the *new normal*, our U3A is changing in the way it works, please stay with us for what may be a long haul but be assured the committee is certain that eventually to quote the late Dame Vera Lynn ‘WE will meet again’

*Stay Safe*

*Ian Byrnes*  
 man

Chair-



## Zoom Talk Friday July 17



For our very first Monthly Meeting since lockdown began, our Speaker Seeker, arranged what proved to be a fascinating talk by Ian Keable who told us about

### “The Century of Deception: The Birth of Hoaxes in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century”.

Once everyone who had reserved a ticket had logged onto Zoom, Ian explained that he became interested in hoaxes and amusing deceptions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century because that is the earliest age when one can discover reliable sources of our knowledge of hoaxes: newspapers and so on.

Unlike cons, hoaxes are done for reasons other than financial gain. Ian told us of three of these.

The first concerned a Godalming hop picker named Mary Toft(s) who, one day, dreamt of rabbits and awoke to find herself giving birth to a rabbit. Her husband called for John Howe, a male midwife who delivered the woman of another 16 ! Mr Howe contacted among others, the surgeon-anatomist to King George 1 and took Mary to London to be examined, but, there, despite suffering from labour pains, she produced no more little bunnies. William Hogarth was so intrigued by Mary’s tale that he produced an engraving called “The Wise Men of Godalming in Consultation.” Two days later, Mary confessed to the hoax. She died, after no further furry births, at the age of 96.

Ian’s second hoax concerned a late 17<sup>th</sup> century Frenchman named Georges Psalmanazar. He was born into poverty but was educated and possessed a great memory. In his teens, he travelled to Germany as an Irish Catholic pilgrim to find his absent father. Sadly, his father wanted nothing to do with Georges, who went on to Cologne, this time in the guise of a Japanese pilgrim. There, he met an army Chaplain with whom he formed a hoax. He became “Georges from Formosa” and very convincing as a Formosan. They travelled to London where Georges made his entry into British society, regaling the great and the good with entirely fictitious facts about his country of origin. He produced a book entitled “Description of Formosa”, full of detailed descriptions of the land, all of them entirely made up. Georges was sent to Oxford where he lived so well that he developed gout, but eventually produced the book which contained replies to objections to details in the first book

How did he succeed in his hoax? Well, he had a very good memory, was very consistent in his descriptions of Formosa, and was quick-witted. He was a nice young man and so credible that the Bishop and others believed in him. Later, he became a very good hack writer and a friend of Dr Johnson who thought him a hardworking, Christian gentleman. In 1764, “Memoirs of Georges Psalmanazar, a reputed Native of Formosa” was published. In this, Georges confessed everything.

The third and final hoax was the Bottle Conjurer of 1749. A notice appeared in newspapers inviting the public to the New Theatre in Haymarket the next day, where a conjurer would climb into a bottle and sing inside it. The paying public duly turned up in good numbers, but, alas, the conjurer didn’t! There was a riot. The theatre was ransacked, fittings and money were stolen. The military arrived to quell the mob. Pamphlets and newspaper articles were written about the event. The Duke of Cumberland lost his sword in the theatre and offered a reward of 30 guineas.

The story went that the conjurer had gone to a bar, where he showed a fellow drinker what he was going to do at the New Theatre. The latter - the scoundrel! – promptly corked the bottle! The hoax survived in people’s memory for some years, with Herman Melville and Charles Dickens using the phrase “bottle conjurer”.

Who was the perpetrator of this hoax? There is a report that it was the Duke of Montagu who was not only very rich and very well-connected, but also a serial hoaxer. He delighted in using itching powder, distorting mirrors and so on. He was also a very good friend of Cumberland who was lampooned in a humiliating cartoon. It was Montagu who paid for the £400 pounds of damage to the theatre. The Duke died shortly after this event, but the truth did not appear until 23 years after the hoax.

Were they more gullible in the 18<sup>th</sup> century than we are today? Consider, if you will, the Loch Ness monster photos and reports, the Piltown man, the Hitler Diaries and Panorama’s Spaghetti-growing-on-trees April Fool’s Day report.

All together, an entertaining, well researched talk from a practised raconteur who connects well with his audience.

*Roger Davies*

## THRAPSTON & DISTRICT U3A - 2020 AGM

As you will be aware, the AGM planned for May this year was postponed because of the COVID-19 restrictions.

However, an AGM must be held within 15 months of the previous AGM, so the following has been adopted for this year.

All members with a registered email address will receive a request to submit their voting preferences. Please answer the questions and then press the submit button.

Members who do not have an email address will receive information through the post.

**All responses must be received by Noon on 21st August 2020**

### NOTE:

The Executive Committee, i.e. Chair, Vice-Chair & Treasurer, were elected uncontested. Unfortunately, nominations were not received for the post of Secretary.

Of the 8 remaining Committee places, 6 nominations were received and so were elected uncontested.

There are currently 2 vacancies on the Committee plus the Secretary post.

These two vacancies on the Committee provide an opportunity for members to have a 'voice' on how Thrapston U3A should move on in the future.

Please consider whether you would like to join the Committee. The question is asked on the AGM voting preferences email.

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### "PLAZA" & ZOOM MEETINGS



#### HELP NEEDED

The Committee have been informed by the Town Council that the restrictions with using the Plaza, when it does become available, will initially mean that any use by the U3A would not be feasible.

There is no meeting planned for Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> August.

Following the July Meeting with Ian Keable as speaker, which was held using Zoom, the Committee is investigating whether future meetings with a speaker could be arranged.

A speaker has been contacted regarding a Zoom meeting, just like the July meeting, for Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> September.

**HOWEVER**, for this to take place the Committee needs a volunteer to host the Zoom meeting on the day.

All the preparation work and making tickets available will be done beforehand.

It is the pre-discussion with the speaker and on-the-day hosting for which the Committee needs help. So, if you are familiar with hosting a meeting on Zoom, and willing to help the meeting take place, please contact Neil Busby on [websitethrapstonU3A@gmail.com](mailto:websitethrapstonU3A@gmail.com) as soon as possible please.

## TAI CHI



After 5 months of inactivity we are meeting again !

Every Thursday 2.00 on the lawn at Baptist Church. The venue is outside so weather permitting.

Be great to see all our group members..... with sunhats or umbrellas !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

*Linda Vickerman*

## FRENCH ENCORE

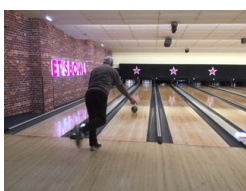


During the current times restricting group meetings *French Encore* are now meeting via Zoom each Thursday afternoon 2pm-3.30pm and we can welcome more U3A members to French conversation with a view to building up and consolidating vocabulary, grammatical skills and fluency in a relaxed atmosphere.

(My contact details remain unchanged.)

*Jan Pacey*

Tony Lewis 10.12.40 - 14.07.20



I would like to say thank you to members of Thrapston U3A for the kind messages , cards and the donations received in memory of Tony. We raised over £1500 with NGNPUK to source a Syringe Driver .This will benefit us locally & will be presented to Cransley Hospice. There is now a permanent tribute to Tony set up with Pancreatic Cancer Action. This charity focuses on the awareness of early diagnosis.

*Linda*



## GROUP LEADERS ZOOM MEETINGS

Two Group Leaders meeting were held by Zoom on the 21 and 24 July. This is another first for our U3A. Both meetings were well attended. In total there was 21 group leaders who "Zoomed" in. This did not include some committee members that attended. There was only 4 Group Leaders who were unable to attend either meeting. This accounted for 30 of our Groups making this a very good attendance.

As Group Leaders are unable to have face to face meetings and currently unable to continue with their groups they had all been keeping in touch by Phone, Email, Zoom, Text, WhatsApp and other forms of social media.

## GROUP VACANCIES

We currently require Group Leader for the following two Groups as shown below,

History Walks

Sunday Lunches for single people which are held one Sunday a month

If you are interested in joining any of these groups please contact me on the details shown below,

Anna Bond

Group Co-ordinator

Groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com

## *Business Secretary Wanted*



### **MEETING MINUTES**

An enthusiastic person is required to become Business Secretary of our U3A, to take the minutes and notes of our Committee and Finance Sub Committee,.

There is only 1 meeting of the Committees each per month, currently all meetings are held on line so travel is not involved"

A full job description is available on our website ([www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk](http://www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk)) or call me, the current secretary on 01832 732002 for a chat about the "job"

Ian

*Secretary*

*Thrapston & District U3A*

*Registered Charity Number 1179593*



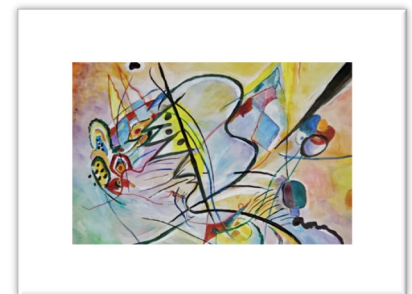
*What one of our u3a members has been doing during Lockdown*



Mandy Dawkins has sent in these pictures as she wanted to share them with our members to show what she has been doing during Lockdown to keep herself occupied.



Mandy has written “I have been really busy, never a dull moment. From doing things that needed doing like covering the kitchen chairs, building a mini pond as our other mini pond developed a leak. Then using up the broken crocks and mini tiles to make mosaics on floor tiles. I have also gone completely out of my comfort zone in art by doing Zoom abstract art workshops online - Hockney, Picasso and Kandinsky. Stretching the old grey cells”



“You may have thought why has she got all those pictures? Well like Dame Judi Dench and the Duchess of Cornwall I have found social media ie. for me Facebook is invaluable for keeping in touch with friends and family from Thailand, USA and from Devon to Aberdeen in this country. It has been a great way of showing what we are getting up to.

I also have an 88 year old cousin in Suffolk who only has her phone and TV to keep in touch with the world, every now and then I write her a chatty letter with a page of photos I have taken. This is her lifeline. It is sad we have lost the art of letter writing. I do write the letter on my laptop and choose a nice handwriting font so it does not look like a business letter”.

Has anyone out there got a friend or relation with no technology that they could write to?

*Mandy Dawkins*

## COMPETITION CLOSING DATE REMINDER



**Time is running out to enter the competition  
The deadline for the competition is the 21 August 2020  
So don't delay submit your entries now to avoid disappointment**

**Poetry Competition:** Topic "Lockdown"

2 categories (a) General Membership (b) Members of the Creative Writing Group

**Short Story Competition** 750 -1000 words Topic "Lockdown "

2 categories (a) General Membership (b) Members of the Creative Writing Group

**Photography Competition:** 3 Topics: Summer Sky, Pets in summer, Gardens

2 categories (a) General Membership (b) Members of the Photography Group

All members can enter, electronically please, entries to a new email address

[Competitionsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:Competitionsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

The closing date for entries for these competitions is 21 August 2020 at 10.00am.

*Please indicate which group you are entering.*

Ian Byrnes  
Chairman



*To all keen gardeners in our U3A Group !!!!*

I have a large supply of well rotted, dry, straw-free and easy to bag-up stable manure to give away free. Be prepared as Autumn is not that far away.

Please contact me to arrange collection near Aldwincle. You will need to provide your own bags, sacks or trailer.

John Percy  
01832 720130  
[johnpercy1947@gmail.com](mailto:johnpercy1947@gmail.com)



Telephone numbers given in the newsletter are usually preceded by the Thrapston STD code—01832.  
Any Raunds numbers (indicated by R) need the STD code 01933

## ***Thrapston and District U3A Committee 2020/21***

Chair: Ian Bynes	<a href="mailto:chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com">chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>
Vice Chair: Wendy Davies	<a href="mailto:vicechairthrapstonu3a@gmail.com">vicechairthrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>
Treasurer: Sue Campbell	<a href="mailto:treasurerthrapstonu3a@gmail.com">treasurerthrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>
Secretary: Vacant	<a href="mailto:secretarythrapstonu3a@gmail.com">secretarythrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>
Groups Co-ordinator: Anna Bond	<a href="mailto:groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com">groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>
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IT Operations/Website Manager: Neil Busby	<a href="mailto:websitethrapstonu3a@gmail.com">websitethrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>
Plaza Welcome Manager: Vacant	<a href="mailto:welcomethrapstonu3a@gmail.com">welcomethrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>

### ***Off Committee Roles***

<i>Access Advisor: Glyn Hill</i>	<a href="mailto:accessthrapstonu3a@gmail.com">accessthrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>
<i>New Members Rep: Dianne Strickland</i>	<a href="mailto:repthrapstonu3a@gmail.com">repthrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>
<i>Refreshments Organiser: Ann Thorpe</i>	
<i>Social Committee: Viv Tunstall</i>	

## **A note from the Editor**

This newsletter is published on behalf of the committee of the Thrapston and District U3A.  
The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, or of the committee of the Thrapston and District U3A, or of the U3A Trust.

**Please note that items for inclusion in the next newsletter should reach the Editor by the first Friday in the month.**

Editor and publisher : Tina Jones - email: [editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

*Thrapston & District U3A is a registered charity number 1179593*