Northumbria Region U3A

The Messenger

Newsletter – Magazine for July 2020



Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before, and wiser than the one that comes after it.

George Orwell

Well, Doris Day had it covered really.

"Que sera sera, whatever will be, will be."

We put so much effort into formulating our three year plans, did anyone anticipate this situation?

My imagination doesn't stretch to cover what our lives will be in a few months' time.

Will there be another wave?

Whatever will we return to when groups start meeting up again?

Will we be getting back together in a room?

Will we still be Zooming week on week?

Will we only have groups which can meet outside?

Will we continue to do our research alone and report it online?

It's hard enough trying to catch each interjection of every member in a U3A group in normal circumstances, without having to interpret their mouthed words through opaque masks!

As one friend said today,

"I don't know whether to put my mask on first, followed by my hearing aid, then my glasses or the other way round. It's a good job my ears are getting bigger!"

Having spent so much of our time keeping in contact with all our members during the worst of the pandemic, will there be enough of us with the energy to get it all going again?

Do we want to?

Are we too wary, too uncertain, too confused by all the doom-mongers?

My hope is that there will be lots of younger new-members because they have lost their jobs, retired early or accepted redundancy as their firms strove to remain in profit; perhaps **they** will be the ones to determine the face of the new U3A, or will it be you?

So, what do you think?

"The future's not ours to see Que sera sera..."

Mo Brown Newcastle and Jesmond U3As, Acting Chair Northumbria Region U3A, Registered Charity no 1116695

Beyond Lockdown

The Third Age Trust has formed a Working Group which aims to assist and support U3As as they reopen and to focus on ways of attracting new members through advertising and promoting the U3A.

They will be looking at ways of developing and changing existing activities to adapt to social distancing.

This group will look at ways of ensuring new members are made welcome and can participate in and enjoy their U3As in these unusual times where we are unable to run general public meetings and where interest groups are not able to function in the normal way.

It seems so long now since we met physically at monthly meetings or in our groups and for months all that has been available for many of us is zoom or facetime to see family or friends. However, as lockdown eases and our meeting venues open it seems possible, we may be able to meet physically but in limited numbers.

To enable that many U3As are carrying out risk assessments on the venues they use for all meetings. The third age website has good advice on carrying out risk assessments, agreeing them with membership and how many can safely meet according to latest guidelines.

I also know of Newcastle U3A taking an initiative with local chairs and secretaries on the way back to normality.

If your U3A is finding a way back and you would like to share it please let me know and I will help to get it shared/published on our Regional website.

Stay safe and try to keep your membership informed of your plans and thinking.

Peter Chrichard - Event Co-ordinator

Boldon U3A during lockdown

Hi everyone, I am Stephanie Yearnshire and I have just taken over as chair at Boldon U3A and found I had four weeks to hold an AGM. (All in hand). My Business Secretary Denise Walter has been outstanding especially as she is new in post as well.

The group leader of the Contemporary Music Group (40-50 members) Adam Walter has been preparing a weekly music podcast of music from the 1950's onwards and sending that out to his members often together with a music quiz. This is competently done and enjoyable to hear. It has been extremely well received.

Ann Small our Gardening Group Leader sends out regular gardening dispatches plus exceptional pictures of members plants and gardens which they actively send to her. Her work is sought after and her group hold her in high regard.

I have been researching and editing a '**Stephanie's Gossip Column'** for the last twelve weeks sending it out to sixty people. It is meant to be informative (learning) and funny

Stephanie's Gossip Column – a little taste





Difficulties mastered are opportunities won - Churchill 1954

Criticism may not be agreeable but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body; it draws attention to an unhealthy state of thing - Churchill 1955

Fashionista.

Dresses. During a world cruise last year, I bought a couple of baggy dresses in Sydney to cope with the heat. They certainly were not part of the UK fashion scene and so I have not worn them since. I got a surprise opening a paper recently to find that they are recommended fashion wear for this year.

'Neck Mess' is the latest mainly male fashion of wearing several chains about the neck. (Apparently copied from the guy in Normal)

Latest Reads

I came across a series of four books by S. G. MacLean, a Scot whose degree topic was Puritan England under Oliver Cromwell.

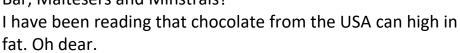
The story lines are centred on Cromwellian crimes, conspiracy and spying within the Royalist and Puritan struggles.

The key character is Damian Seeker an army Captain cum spy taker. The story lines are good and the fifth and last book is out in July. It's unusual to find books or audio set in this period, usually it is the Tudors or Stuarts. McLean has been identified as one of the best writers of historical crime.



Chocolate

Did you know that the Yorkie Bar followed by Bounty, Wispa and Cadburys Dairy Milk are said to have the most fat much better options are Milky Way, Milky Bar, Smarties, Crunchie Bar, Maltesers and Minstrals?





The Historic Boldons

Right under our noses is a group of villages of extreme historic interest. Not only does St. Nicholas Church date from 13th Century but its foundations date to Saxon times. In 1183 there is reference to a 200 person Norman village called Newton stretching along either side of the road between Sunderland and Newcastle, this became Boldon. It is listed in the Boldon Burke which records the lands of the Prince Bishop and where tenants had to work three days for the Bishop. In 1644, during the Cavalier/Parliamentary war, Newcastle supported the King and Sunderland assisted by the Scots supported the Parliamentarians. A battle took place between the two in Boldon at Nanny Cow Hill. A Scottish

cannon was found in the River Wear and now stands in Barnes Park Sunderland. A cannon ball was found in 2006. There are a number of buildings in The Boldons of architectural merit.

Tales of My Travels-The White House

In the 1990's I was a speaker at a conference in America and subsequently received an invitation to an evening visit to the White House. Our host was a drugs enforcement officer whose job was so dangerous that she had to carry three guns, one in the small of her back, one strapped to her thigh and one in her purse (bag). Her great grandmother had been a Cherokee princess and Aneva had the most beautiful sleek black hair. Her husband a naval officer was later killed in the Twin Towers. The White house was fascinating, the Oval Office was not that big and the Clintons were having Chicken Maryland for a formal lunch the next day and it was being prepared the night before in the tiniest kitchen. The press hall and garden press area are impressive with permanently set up TV cameras. In the press hall I asked Aneva if I could speak at the raised podium that the President used when he addressed the world. She said, "Yes" So undaunted, I stepped up to the mike and thanked the United States for holding the Conference and making us welcome.

Gardening Corner: Garden Thugs- Ivy and Fairy Rings





Ivy
We spoke in an earlier edition about the problems of Ivy as a Garden Thug.

At the beginning of lock down I cut the stems at the bottom of the above Ivy (with permission) and again at about 6-12 inches further up. Twelve weeks later the ivy which had been living off the Laburnum Tree is dead. I will pull it off shortly.

The Laburnum is thriving and looks truly beautiful.

Fairy Ring

The second picture is of a Fairy Ring but there is nothing Fairy-like about this. The Fairy Ring is a fungal colony on a lawn that can cause a ring or horseshoe shape of very green grass, or dead grass and/or toadstools after rain.

Fairy rings grow outward as well as down infecting a healthy lawn, they are spread by spores or infected soil. They can be spread by cutting or aerating equipment used on the unhealthy lawn then used on the healthy part of the lawn.

It is difficult to remove: it might help to add healthy microbes by top dressing with humus builder i.e. aged manure or finished compost, or aerate and keep soaked There is no natural control and once they appear, they are very difficult to eliminate.

Stephanie Yearnshire - Chair Boldon U3A

Something else you may be interested in to pass the time away

As lockdown eases, Writers Against Covid-19 continues to publish a short story every day, providing people with an entertaining read during the pandemic and beyond. With more than 80 stories from around the world, there's something for everyone. Find them at http://www.writerscircle.net

One of the stories is The Killer: Hawthorne stirred himself to do a bit of gardening, but things soon got out of hand.

I hope you enjoy the site.

Louise Moss – Saltburn U3A

Boldon U3A Contemporary Music Group

The U3A MUSIC GROUP was set up in 2013 and as of March 2020 had over 50 members. The group is an active vibrant group that meets once a month and aims to Learn, Laugh and Live and we certainly do that!

Each session has a theme – playing records e.g. people's names/places/colours etc. Members email their favourite tunes and suggestions to Adam Walter. DJ Adam co-ordinates the proceedings streaming the music via some high quality speakers. Covering a wide range of music from numerous genres and eras, Adam provides some researched information into the artists, their lives, influences etc. Members often have the group enthralled sharing their own personal knowledge, memories, stories of records and concerts they have attended. The sessions include quizzes, number one from 50 years ago and a selection of new releases where the group vote them a "hit or miss" in true Juke Box Jury style!



In October 2014 some members of the group travelled to the Deep South visiting Nashville, Memphis and New Orleans. They were able to bring back and share their increased musical knowledge, history and experience to the group. In September 2018 the entire group went to Liverpool on a three day Beatles trip staying at the famous Adelphi Hotel.



We have enjoyed numerous speakers and in June 2017 the lovely Faye Tozer came to talk about her theatre experience and life with her chart topping pop group Steps. This was all before her increased television fame on Strictly!

Over the years the group has enjoyed various theatre trips (The Jersey Boys, Sunny Afternoon, Glenn Miller Story) and recently in March 2020 went to see live in concert the brilliant Manfred's featuring the original lead singer Paul Jones. A great night was had by all.

During Covid19 crisis ADAM has been sending out weekly email newsletters coupled with ten minute podcast music quizzes. These have been very well received and have helped keep the group connected through these lockdown times. One member, Graham Brown, lamenting these difficult times recently sent a message that we would all endorse – 'Missing our Monday meetings, always special, always fun and friendly, come back soon!'

Pictures 1) The U3A Music Group at the Strawberry Fields gates in Liverpool - September 2018, 2) Adam with Faye Tozer - June 2017

John Yearnshire - Boldon U3A

This is my diary story during lockdown.

In the garden

I decided last summer to start growing wildflowers and let the lawns go wild, with mown edges and a mown path cutting through the lawn on the right. It's divided into two at the front and both lawns are growing really well with what I believe is reed grass or small weed (courtesy of the PlantSnap app) I like the way it sways in the wind and reminds me of meadows. At the moment, I have Corncockle and a yellow plant not yet identified, growing well and others at the leaf stage.

Also, four tubs of potatoes which have come along amazingly since it stated to rain, four tomato plants grown from seed and around forty Rudbeckia plants (free with 'Gardeners' World') all grown from seed. I've planted out about 20 so far. I've taken cuttings of several plants, inspired by watching Gardener's world, so will be finding homes for them in a couple of weeks. I have potted plants in the back garden.

Actually, at the moment, I'm really glad of the rain as being in the garden was taking over my life!!

Learning from art



I'm a student on an art course with Newcastle City Learning. Our tutor, Silvia, sets a challenge every Wednesday which we watch on YouTube, then paint a scene of our own choice using the techniques demonstrated by her. Very challenging at times but also very enjoyable and rewarding.

Using Newcastle U3A's website, I've also been practising dowsing, following our Newcastle U3A's Group Leader's online learning and have been enjoying the 'Astronomy Online Learning', too.

With the easing of lockdown, I have been out with my family a couple of times for a walk, travelling separately and a couple of days ago, went to see Souter Lighthouse and walked along the Lease, on my own, armed with my camera, as the car park is now open. It was as quiet as usual but everyone was keeping a respectful distance from each other along the walk.

I enjoy photography and one of my ambitions is to take a detailed photo of a full moon.

During early lockdown I started a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle which was a challenge and a half!! After finishing, I was going to put it all back in the box but as I picked it up it stayed in one piece so as I had a spare frame, I decided to keep it as a memory of keeping busy during lockdown.

I'm thankful for being able to keep in touch with my family and friends via Facebook and look forward to meeting members again when things are more settled.

I didn't realise how busy I've been keeping until I wrote it all down!! (🖨)



Regional Zoom IT Weekly?



Why not give it a go?
- no obligation to drop in again
Talk and hear about
Scams received
Things going wrong with your laptop
Mac and Windows keyboard Shortcuts for
Zoom
Zoom on an iPhone or iPad

Gadgets we've sent off for during lockdown. Technology news in the media Ideas and problems- which is the best modem?

It is different every week but mostly lighthearted Email Mo for an invitation.

NRU3A.events@gmail.com.

Face Masks

How to make a face mask at no extra cost whatsoever in under three minutes. It would be nice to see everyone wearing a mask, maybe families and other relatives can compete for the funniest, some socks already have a logo on as seen in the video, and I defy anyone involved in making these not to have an enjoyable time. Have a look at https://youtu.be/fzSZVYLTd60 and have a go.

Arthur Speck - Houghton-le-Spring U3A

'Another House Through Time by The Other David', David Yaxley Newcastle U3A

A Personal Research Project During Lockdown

During lockdown, I watched with great pleasure, the third in the series of "A House Through Time", presented by David Olusoga on BBC2. Many U3A members will know that the programme presented the history of three houses and their occupants. The first two houses were given the biographical approach. The third house was the oldest of the three and it was equally absorbing, so I ordered the book relating to the series. It not only offered a general history of domestic housing in England but gave helpful guidance on the way to investigate the history of your own house - assuming that you are not the first occupant.



My own house is in Lesbury Road in Heaton. Like the rest of Lesbury Road it was built in 1906 - quite early enough to have an interesting history. The land on which it was built was, until the 1850s, farmland. The land was then bought by Sir William Armstrong. He used some of it to create Armstrong Park. That which is east of Heaton Road he gave to his nephew, with strict conditions relating to the selling price of any houses built there. My house was bought by Mr and Mrs John Beall for £750.00. In 1906, a typical annual salary for a clerk was £150 a year. In fact, Mr Beall was a printer and I imagine he owned his own business but that will be another subject of my inquiries. What is evident from those deeds which I have in my possession is that the Bealls lived in the house from 1906 to 1931. They then sold it, for £900.00 to Mr and Mrs William Blaylock. The Blaylocks lived in Lesbury Road until William died in 1943. The Blaylock family sold the house for £2300. None of the houses in Lesbury Road was destroyed by bombing but I imagine some damage was done. In the period 1950

to 1970, old houses were unfashionable and some of the houses were multiply-occupied. Between 1949 and 1999, the house was occupied for relatively short periods. We lived in the house from 1999 until 2015, when my wife died.

I still live in Lesbury Road and have improved on the house's structure while many of the other houses have been "gentrified", often by restoring their Edwardian elegance.

My research will continue. When lockdown ceases, I shall consult archives and records to learn more about my house through time.

David Yaxley – Newcastle U3A

S.E. Northumbria Regional U3A Chairs' and Business Secretaries' Network and Northumbria Region U3A Treasurers' Network

Groups may not be meeting face to face for some time but meetings are still being held! We are using Zoom.

Both of the above informal networks have held virtual meetings and had worthwhile discussions during the meetings. We've been learning a lot from each other such as coping strategies our U3As are using during this crisis.

If you would like to join in the next meeting, please email me. Catherine Stevenson Newcastle U3A: newcastleu3a@hotmail.com you will be very welcome.

Catherine Stevenson - Newcastle U3A

Now You See It, Now You Don't



A few members of Whickham and District's Sight and Sound Group had an eventful day at the Causey Arch near Stanley, Co. Durham recently, whilst filming for a project exploring the history of the area. Filming was being done using a drone, which was operated by our guest for the day and potential new member John Walley.

Things were going quite well until suddenly John said,

"Oh dear, we've lost the pictures. I think the drone has hit a tree!"

The drone has a tracking system, so we had a rough idea where it had landed.

Unfortunately, the undergrowth around the Causey Arch was quite dense, so a search was



proving difficult. After about an hour the drone was spotted down a very steep embankment leading down to the river. Arthur Coulson, Sight and Sound Member and Chair of Whickham and District U3A volunteered to climb down the steep slope and attempt to recover the drone. After a rather "exciting" climb down the embankment the drone was recovered and returned apparently undamaged, apart from missing one of its legs.

With so much time searching for the drone the required information was not completed, therefore filming is still on going.

Cecilia Coulson - Whickham and District Programme Secretary

Saltburn District U3A Membership Matters

We have set up a Facebook page where members can share their ideas and projects or just keep up to date and connected with each other.

Our Facebook group can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/saltburnu3a/ Just search for Saltburn District U3A Facebook Group Name: Saltburn District U3A

Please keep in touch with us in whichever way you feel most comfortable. We would love to hear from you and are open to suggestions about how we continue to operate, both at the moment and in the future. The Committee continues to keep abreast of developments, and will keep members updated on progress to ensure a smooth transition back to 'normality' when the time is right.

Please keep an eye on the website for the most up to date information.

Liz Read - Saltburn U3A

Taking the Time

For many of our members, through the past few weeks, some important factors have shined through. These have included their amazing ability to readjust their lives in resourceful and philosophical ways. However, one factor, in particular, has come to the forefront and that is their passion for lifelong learning.

'I've been taking online courses in two subjects'

'It's really been an experience finding new walking routes where I live. I hadn't known they existed! There were some beautiful flowers by a pathway so I had to go home and find out what they were called'

'What did I do without Zoom? I learned how to use it'

'I've actually looked at our Newcastle U3A website and learned a lot about some groups I'd like to join.'

The U3A principle of learning has kept minds and bodies ticking over but most members would agree that they miss their group meetings. Discussing face to face with friends sharing like interests.

A second factor which has helped us is about taking the time to see and hear what is around us. Noticing which birds come into the garden, watching cloud formations, listening to music they'd forgotten about, revisiting old TV programmes are amongst a long list of experiences.

It all reminded me of a well-known poem about taking the time to look. It's 'Leisure' by W.H. Davies

'What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare. No time to stand beneath the boughs And stare as long as sheep or cows.

.....

A poor life this if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare'

During this long interim of self - isolation, we have taken the time to stand and stare and in doing so have sometimes seen the world from a new perspective and been thankful we have so many wonderful things around us to learn from.

Bring all these experiences with you when you return to group meetings and share them with other members.



Lockdown Acrostic Poem

Less contact, less shopping, less noise, less pollution, less stress, less support.

Onus, on the individual to do the right thing, to show support for others, to stay

Onus, on the individual to do the right thing, to show support for others, to stay at home, to stay safe, to save lives.

Caring, for children, for others, young and old, for ourselves. Kindness to all, this is new territory, never before trodden.

Deaths, too many, too soon, too late.

Outdoor exercise, one hour a day, every day – more than some have ever had, less than some will be used to.

Wonderment – at the weather, growth in the garden and beyond, activities possible within strict confines, the world's stillness, the applause for heroes, nature at its best, unspoiled.

Normality, what was it? (we have forgotten already). Do we still want it? What is meant by the 'new normal'? And will this be a viable alternative?

Saltburn U3A

Upstart Crow – A Shakespeare reading group



We kept our Upstart Crow Group going, in terms of shared group discussion by email, until we finished reading Othello in April. It was clear that Othello had been a moving and popular play. However, with Shakespeare, it wasn't practical to start a new play.

After completing Othello, it was a just a case of letting the group know of the dates and times of free, top quality

Shakespeare plays that were being released on YouTube, iPlayer and BBC4, so members could watch plays in order of their own choosing. This last stage did generate some interesting comments on particular plays. I have very much enjoyed the online chat over the weeks. However, I think we could all be 'Shakespeared-out' by now and an early start to our summer break beckons.

Val Metcalf – Saltburn U3A

Raising the profile of U3A

Throughout my working life, I have been volunteering or working for voluntary organisations and community groups. Always, Councils for Voluntary Service or Rural Community Councils and Volunteer Centres produced lists and directories of organisations on their patch.

Eventually, many of these went online. Many local and health authorities started to compile their own lists of voluntary organisations. Much more recently, lots more lists have been compiled by Social Prescribers, Care Navigators, Healthwatch, Clinical Commissioning Groups etc.

For 25 years, I was an Assistant Director of the national mental health charity Mind. Following retirement, I was a very active Rotarian (Club President, North East 'Scholars' Co-ordinator). In recent lockdown emails, I was reminded of how both of these organisations - over a period of time - developed their working titles to maximise impact, quite simply, primarily in on-line and print directories.

Without telling the whole story ...

- the Northumberland Association for Mental Health became Northumberland Mind and, then, Mind Northumberland (there were loads of Northumberland entries, but only one M for Mind entry)
- Seahouses and District Rotary Club became Seahouses Rotary Club and, then, Rotary Seahouses (and, similarly, there were loads of Seahouses entries but just one R for Rotary entry).

Locally, I have encouraged my own U3A to begin calling itself U3A Wooler, rather than Wooler U3A. In a range of local voluntary sector/local authority/NHS online and print directories ... we are now the only entry under U for U3A and previously we were lost in the large number of Wooler entries.

Of course, this idea would not work in Uttoxeter!

Kelvin Rushworth - U3A Wooler

International Group during lockdown

On the U3A website, it is interesting to see that local U3A 'International' interest groups seems to be "Cultural" (exchanges and twinning) or "Language" (communication, language exchange, study days).

I have only been a U3A member for a few years and, not having looked at the website, I began an International interest group which did not seem to fit in with the usual model!

In 'ordinary' times, we meet for two hours during the afternoon of the first Monday of each month. During those meetings, we have an introductory round (when members talk about anything in the least bit 'international' that has come to their attention during the previous few weeks).

Then, we have an 'international' presentation by one of our own members (e.g. 'Living in Ghana, Nigeria and The Gambia', 'Walking along the Camino de Santiago') or by an external guest speaker (e.g. 'Resettling Syrian Refugees in Northumberland', 'Living with Bedouin Arabs').



Entrance to Kagyu Samye Ling Monastery and Tibetan Centre Eskdalemuir, near Langholm, Dumfriesshire, Scotland

Three times each year, we have outings (e.g. award-winning Turkish restaurant in Whitley Bay, Tibetan Buddhist Temple in the Scottish Borders, Oriental Museum at Durham University).



Prior to each meeting, members receive three 'international' newsletters – Signpost (about U3As across the world - https://worldu3a.org/signpost), CoverAge (from Age Platform Europe, "the voice of older persons at EU level" -

https://www.age-platform.eu/newsletter-coverage) and Pass it On (a global newsletter for positive ageing - https://www.passitonnetwork.org) — and a list, relevant to that month, of the recognised special days designated by the United Nations.

Lockdown meant that we were unable to meet and, certainly, unable to go on outings. Luckily, all but two members have access to an email address but, not so luckily, there was little enthusiasm for a Zoom meeting (anyhow, some members felt that this method would not be very inclusive).

So, I asked that – as far as possible – members still use the usual two hours for our 'international' interests. Although we would not be together, we would all be accessing information at the same time.

I asked members to wait until our 'usual meeting time', before opening and reading the three newsletters and the United Nations list. In the first hour, I asked that members follow links in the newsletters and read about topics of special interest to them and to choose one or two of the UN special days and find out more about them (e.g. in July: 18 was Nelson Mandela International Day and 30 was World Day against trafficking in persons).

In the second hour, I provided a number of links for members to follow their interests (e.g. virtual tours of the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China, learning moves for a Bollywood dance, making a Travel Memories Zine - homemade paper mini-magazine, watching talks about 'Incredible flora and fauna of Madagascar' and 'Tallinn's hidden talent: Michael Sittow').

Feedback has been great and, of course, I printed and posted as much as I could to the two 'unconnected members' and apologised that they were unable to follow links.

We all want to meet again as soon as it is safe to do so. Planned outings for 2020 include a Thai meal at the new restaurant in Alnwick, the Great North Museum (World Cultures showcases) and the new Sikh Temple in Newcastle.

Kelvin Rushworth - U3A Wooler

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Vice Chairman	
Business Secretary	Jane MATHIESON, Teesdale
Treasurer	Mike WALLACE, Newcastle
Minute Secretary	Mary BARLOW, Sunderland
Member	Fliss HILL, Gateshead
Member	Ann CARR, Bishop Auckland
Member	Jeff ARMSTRONG, Berwick
Co- Opted Member	Peter CHRICHARD, Cramlington
Regional Trustee	Sandi RICKERBY

Members of the committee can be contacted by email through the website: https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria

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regionalU3Alist@gmail.com

If you wish to receive information by post contact your own U3A committee's regional contact for the postal address.

You can unsubscribe anytime.

If you want to stop getting the regional emails rather than doing it by unsubscribing from Mailchimp please reply to the email asking to be removed from the list and we will do that straight away.

From the Editor.

May I thank everyone who has taken the time to provided articles and assistance for this edition of The Messenger especially in these difficult times. I do hope that you have enjoyed reading this issue and that it has given you inspiration for the future. Please email your contributions for the next edition to regnewseditor@gmail.com by Friday 16th October 2020. Thank you.