



# Welcome to the u3a Newsletter for the Isle of Wight January 2021

The **u3a** is a UK-wide collection of locally-run interest groups that provides a wide range of opportunities to come together to learn for fun. We enjoy exploring new ideas, skills and activities together.

Web: [www.iowu3a.uk](http://www.iowu3a.uk)

Email: [info@iowu3a.uk](mailto:info@iowu3a.uk)

Follow us on Twitter [@u3aWight](https://twitter.com/u3aWight)

## **Dear Members**

It was a pleasure to meet up with you all in 2020 in spite of the difficult circumstances that Covid-19 forced us to endure. I would like to thank you all for supporting the activities that were organised during the year. It was fun learning to Zoom together! Thanks also to the group leaders who in most cases managed to keep things going and meet safely within the ever changing government guidelines.

Thanks to Sally who organised the December Festive Farmers market stand and everyone who helped in the preparation and on the day. It was a cold day but we handed out 50 copies of the December newsletter along with membership forms and leaflets. We chatted to lots of people about the u3a. We hope that we will see an increase in membership as a result of it.

Thanks also to Roger who assembles and edits our excellent monthly newsletter. It is encouraging to see more contributions from you, the members. Keep them coming.

My final thanks must go to the whole Committee who worked very hard during 2020 to keep the momentum going, engaging with members and increasing our membership in spite of everything. Let's hope that 2021 will be a bumper year for all of us.



Our big project for 2021 is the u3a team round the island coastal walk. It will not be on the 4th June as originally announced but will be on Wednesday June 2nd which is the National u3a day. My ambition is that

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Please check for errors and omissions.

News, articles and updates always welcome.

Newsletter editor Roger Skidmore, [rogerskid@zen.co.uk](mailto:rogerskid@zen.co.uk), 01983 822900

every member of our u3a will become involved in this event. We need planners, supporters and walkers. However, no amount of support and planning will make this happen without walkers. We have 65 miles to walk between us. You can offer to walk 10 miles or 1 mile. Please let me know soon if you are willing to walk on the day. The details can be sorted out later. If you cannot walk on the day, there are plenty of other ways that you can help. We will need drivers, photographers, supporters, check point manners, recorders, etc.

Serious planning will start in January. I have already had a few offers of help with the planning and will need several more. Please let me know if you can help in this capacity even if you can't be there on the day. The January planning meeting will be via Zoom on a date to be advised. Contact me via [chair@iowu3a.uk](mailto:chair@iowu3a.uk) or by phone on 07748 886246 and let me know how you would like to be involved. I look forward to hearing from you.

Finally, a reminder that the Garden Appreciation group (next visit Princess

## **Winter Watch u3a Photography Competition: Subject - Winter**

Don't forget our Photography Competition - Closing Date January 31st.

Please submit photos on the theme of Winter to [editor@iowu3a.uk](mailto:editor@iowu3a.uk)

Pictures can be of a warming meal, your garden, a festive tradition or anything that

Beatrice's Garden at Carisbrooke Castle on 16th January) and the Beaches (next walk January 27th venue Yarmouth) are open to all members. More information on these and other activities is on the Groups page of the website and on our Facebook page. Contact me if you would like to come along.

I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year and look forward to seeing you in 2021.

**Carol Bradshaw**  
Chair



you personally associate with Winter months.

We will publish your photos on our website

*Winners will be announced at the February Speaker Meeting on February 11th 2021,*



# Groups

All Groups are listed at  
[www.iowu3a.uk](http://www.iowu3a.uk)

Please check with the group leader through [groups@iowu3a.uk](mailto:groups@iowu3a.uk) for up to date information.

**Because of the Coronavirus only a few of these groups are being held in person at the moment, the rest are continuing remotely. The new Beach Group continues in person, and outside - at the beach! As does the Garden Appreciation Group - next visit Princess Beatrice Garden at Carisbrooke Castle on January 16th, and will conform to whatever the new guidelines are in place at the time.**

## Writing Group

Hello Writers ,

Hello from the writers group, It's been a productive time once again for our participants on the themes of 'still life' object(s) to include in a story and tales for this time of year. It's always a pleasure and great fun to see how we interpret the brief.

On a day of bad weather 'for dogs with short legs', Thursday 3rd of December, the group met in a large room at the Castle Inn in Newport. All precautions were respected and we remained suitably distanced. It was a treat to see people again after missing our November get-together (something to do with some epidemic regulations...) Over a hot drink we reviewed the aims of our group , and what changes and improvements were needed. Maggie suggested we took it in turns to choose a

theme or prompt of the month and that was agreed. We also had a discussion on the use of poetic forms and rhyming: is a non-rhyming text a poem? Does a poem have to fit a formal frame ? (alliteration!)

Carol had recently completed a U3A creative writing course which sounded both demanding and rewarding. She explained to us what was involved and generously read some of her work which we enjoyed very much.

The U3A was present at the Market in Newport on Saturday, 12 December . This was a good opportunity to publicise the groups which are running in spite of present limitations. Quite a few people showed interest: all fifty newsletters were given out as well as brochures, bookmarks and sweets.

Best regards,

**Christine**

*The writers' group continues to meet in person when restrictions allow. We meet at the Castle Inn Newport, where we have exclusive use of a large room and we meet, socially distanced, in groups of 6.*

And remember **Internet Chess** anytime, anywhere, at [www.chess.com](http://www.chess.com).

**Phone a friend and get a game going!**

# Groups

## Spanish Beginners' Group

Interest in such a group was indicated by those who attended a Zoom meeting kindly organized by Sally Forster at the beginning of December. The idea was to develop a way of learning Spanish from scratch and on-line, at least in the short term. Ultimately it would be good to meet in person but for the moment we must be satisfied with the on-line experience.

Our first functional meeting introduced the alphabet and the phonetic sounds leading on to conjugation of verbs in our second meeting. Lessons will continue after Christmas and anybody interested in joining us would be most welcome. These are early days so it would be easy to catch up and there

is plenty of help at hand. In fact, our first lesson after the holiday will be partly revision so this would be a perfect time to join.

The group is friendly and welcoming – there is no pressure and we are here to enjoy ourselves and get the satisfaction of learning a new language.

If you are interested, please make contact with.....

**Keith Pritchard**

**407942**

**[keithswonderfulworld@gmail.com](mailto:keithswonderfulworld@gmail.com)**



## Walk and Talk about Gardens - Wednesday p.m.

Unfortunately due to inclement weather and other outside restrictions not much walking about gardens has taken place. As the climate on our island is so mild we are already seeing signs of Spring, with polyanthus and primroses in flower and some daffodils in the garden opposite are in bud. Way back in September I decided to make an effort for Spring and planted six pots of tulips, four of hyacinths and a few miniature daffodils. These are all showing healthy shoots and I look forward to seeing the fruit of my labours in Spring. Planting tulips in the garden can be difficult as they seem to disappear during winter. My son told me that he

had seen squirrels stealing them and now even puts wire mesh over his pots. I have not seen that but they do come and scabble away in the pots looking for hidden hazel nuts.

Quite a number of plants are still in flower and I am torn between cutting them back and enjoying the flowers, although I must admit that after the rain, they are not looking their best. Perhaps I will get round to it after Christmas. I think like many others I am looking forward to 2021 and seeing you all again.

Contact by email - [groups@iowu3a.uk](mailto:groups@iowu3a.uk)  
Enjoy your gardening,

**Beryl Tillman**

# Groups

## IoW U3A Film Studies Group

As expected, our last film studies group discussion of 2020 saw out the old year in style. With some wearing the odd paper crown and fortified with seasonal spirit (possibly spirits) we examined the latest film we had all viewed: Jingle Jangle. This film revels in elements of sentiment, (mild) bad characters, right triumphing over greed, and enough dance numbers to satisfy the keenest terpsichorean. As usual, members held a variety of views of how good, bad, or indifferent the viewing experience had been, and we fell to our task of discussion with the usual open exchange of opinions. Indeed, a good time was had by all.

January 2021 sees the group continue the fortnightly discussion programme. Our first film of the New Year is A Beautiful Mind, which will be discussed on Wednesday 6 January at 5pm. (Our Zoom discussions usually last an hour; all films are available on Netflix.) Subsequently, The Trial of the Chicago 7 will be discussed on 20 January; at the time of writing the 3 February film has yet to be agreed. Please note that all IoW members are eligible to join the film studies group.

**Jim Moody**



## Garden Appreciation

The Garden Appreciation Group made a visit to Ventnor Botanic Garden on Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> December. The forecast was not good but four hardy souls enjoyed a walk around the garden being amazed by the range of plants, many of which are still in flower, and the serenity of the place. Thanks to Alison whose mother worked as a nurse at the hospital that was there before the gardens, for the fascinating historical background as well as her plant knowledge.

Once we decided it was time for refreshments we visited the café, drank hot chocolate and coffee, some even ate cake, and sat, socially distanced, and in the warm, putting the world (and some tech problems), to rights. A nice time was had by all.

The next Garden Appreciation visit will be to Princess Beatrice's Garden at Carisbrooke Castle on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> January at 11:00. The garden will obviously be in its winter state but I'm sure it will be interesting to see its structure and enjoy a winter walk. Booking must be done online. All welcome. Contact me on [groups@iowu3a.uk](mailto:groups@iowu3a.uk) or Facebook if you would like to come.

**Carol Bradshaw**



# Groups

## BEACHES

January's walk will be on Wednesday 27th starting at 12:00 (Yarmouth estuary which is independent of tide state and starts and finishes on the coast.) February Beach Walk is on the 24th starting at 12:00 and will be Ryde to Wootton (bus or walk back).

The big beach walk for 2021 will of course be the team round the island coastal walk on June 2nd. Do let me know if you are willing to walk and which part of the coast you would like to walk, as your part of team u3a.wight.

## Team Walk the Coastal Path in a Day Wednesday June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021



## Carol

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**Tea, Chat & Tech - suspended - (usually Forest Road Nursery Café).  
We will resume when cafés are allowed to reopen.**

**In the meantime please call me on 740511 if you would like Tech support,  
particularly if you are having difficulties with Zoom or emails.**

## Family History and Genealogy:

Those new to tracing their roots and others who are more experienced will be very welcome. The aim will be to help each other make progress and share successes and pitfalls. This is a far-reaching topic with a great many fascinating themes for future discussion and research.

Starts **Thursday 21st January** when we will hold an interesting Zoom Talk given by U3A's expert Genealogy Subject Advisor, Steve Dyer, entitled 'Uncovering Your Family's Past - getting started the U3A way' there will also be time for Questions and answers.

The talk will start at 14:30 but join the zoom at 14:00 so that we can introduce ourselves.

(Zoom details to follow.)

**Reading** - Not a book group where we all read the same book but just a 'Reading' group - share what you love to read, what you are reading - articles, papers, research, short stories, History - whatever inspires you or brings you pleasure. First reading is on Zoom on 5th January. Come prepared to talk about your best read over Christmas.

## Green Issues

The new Group for Green Issues will be having a pilot meeting to discuss what areas we would like to cover on the **8th January 2021 at 2pm via Zoom**. Some initial ideas could be reducing our carbon footprint, ways of reducing energy use, surplus food sharing, sharing green tips and I am sure more will be suggested. Please let me know if you would like to attend via Groups on our

website so that I can send you Zoom details. Let me know what you would prefer.

Looking forward to seeing you at some point.

**Dina**



## Thoughts on U3A from a New Member

I joined the local Isle of Wight U3A group just under a month ago - already I have been on a beach walk, attended a lecture on The Secrets of the Solent and had my first Spanish lesson. I'd thought about joining several times over the last few years, but volunteering at the Hospice shop in Ventnor, working in Niton Library and singing with Tritone Singers had kept me busy; now that those activities have become either impossible or very much restricted, plus only being able to interact with one of my 3 families on the Island, I have time on my hands so I took the plunge and joined U3A back in November, and I'm so glad I did.

The beach walk from Cowes to Gurnard and back was most enjoyable. I'm not a hugely social animal, but I find on meeting new people the best thing to do is ask questions and that seems to break the ice. It wasn't all social chit chat - we stopped at various places along the walk to be given little snippets of interesting facts.

While the sun did not shine and rain threatened it was still so much better than sitting at home or walking on one's own (although I do like solo walking as well)!

The "Secrets of the Solent" was a talk via Zoom given by Emily Stroud of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and this was full of interesting facts about the flora and fauna of the Solent, and Emily's enthusiasm for her subject was impressive to say the least (not to mention the antics of her cats in the background).

And yesterday we did Spanish! It felt so good to be doing something different.

My thanks to all the other members, especially to those of you who organise these different activities which help to enrich our lives.

**Angela**

## Ventnor Botanic Gardens Discovery

On 16th December the Garden Group visited Ventnor Botanic Garden. It was a mild damp morning but the threatened rain held off for the duration of our visit. We saw many unusual, interesting and colourful plants, shrubs and trees which has inspired us to return again in the near future.

One shrub immediately caught our attention as soon as we entered the Garden. Nestling on the east wall of the Plantation Room Café was a curious shrub with glossy straplike leaves and large soft and spiky, pale green bladder like fruit cases/seed pods. I had not seen this plant before and unfortunately it did not have an identity tag, so I eagerly took photos with the intention of doing some research when I got home.

However, it was not an easy plant to find on the internet. It seemed to be a type of bladder-nut but the leaves were very different. After an hour I had almost given up my search when up popped: 'Hairy Balls' genus *Gomphocarpus* *Physocarpus*, a milk weed and a real conversation starter as it is also known as 'Family Jewels' or more simply - the 'Balloon Plant'. I believe this is the plant at the Botanic Gardens but I'm no expert and will be happy to stand corrected. Originating from South East Africa where it is regarded as an invasive species, the plant is also found in New Zealand. Often grown to add interest to cut flower bouquets, the soft, bladder-like

papery cases develop from attractive small scented orchid like pink and white flowers. In the UK there is only one supplier in Cornwall where it is known as the 'Swan Plant'. The milky sap is mildly toxic if ingested but 'Hairy Balls' appears to be growing spectacularly well in our Botanic Garden, here on the Isle of Wight.

Apparently, milk weeds are much loved by Monarch butterflies which although normally native to the USA, can migrate spectacularly long distances. Very rare migrants have been recorded in the South West, namely Cornwall and the Scillies.

### *Alison*



## Christmas Past

Every country or region has its own customs, and that is true of Christmas too. Where I come from, Christmas traditions are a bit different: that's how we did things when I was a child. Christmas was a more Christian festival in those days, in spite of rising consumerism, but we didn't go to Mass and our celebrations were more seasonal and ancient than religious. A few days before Christmas, we got a tree. It was a real tree, plastic ones hadn't been thought of then, and it stood secured in its metal tripod in our lounge. The tree was a living thing, like those we could see in the forest, covered in snow - it filled the room with its fragrance of the outdoors and you would breathe deeper when you perceived it.

There was much excitement when we put the tree up and decorated it: first, some slightly rat-tailed tinsel, lots of baubles - which looked retro even then, and a star at the top. For the children the aim was for the tree to be as glittery as possible: there was no colour scheme or theme. We tore pieces of cotton wool and snowed them on the tree with the help of the grown-ups, and finally small metal clip-on candle holders were placed here and there on the branches. And real little candles, that you had to light with matches, on a real resinous tree, with lots of cotton fluff scattered about. Sometimes little bits caught fire but it was part of the fun.

Some years, our grandmother would come and spend Christmas with us, making everything even more exciting.



On Christmas eve, we would have a simple dinner as usual around seven o'clock. But then, instead of going to bed shortly after, the children were allowed to stay up, play and watch television. It was a small black and white set, and that evening it showed cartoons and later, beautiful carol singing in a cathedral. At around nine, we would have a 'réveillon', a celebration meal of salmon canapés with parsley decoration, vol-au-vents with different fillings, cooked white meat sausages called 'boudin blanc', golden and spicy; paté en croûte (cold meat pie) served with salad and to finish with some chocolate log or perhaps some ice-cream. The children would be allowed to toast the occasion with a drop of Champagne in tall glasses. This meal was sheer luxury in our eyes and we felt quite grown up and sophisticated. It was around then that the younger boy would invariably become overtired with the excitement of the occasion and the mad anticipation of the following morning. His tears were our signal that bedtime had arrived. We'd check that our shoe was in its place under the tree, ready for Father Christmas, and off to bed we went.

Just one empty little shoe each. We didn't leave a drink out for Father Christmas or a carrot for the reindeer. No presents were put under the tree days earlier for children to pick up and rattle. No stocking at the foot of the bed. No pudding or mince pies. No hurricane of greeting cards appeared

or was sent: you only wrote to close family and friends whom you wouldn't see during the festive season, and mostly to send New Year greetings. People you saw, you exchanged greetings with.

Most years, it started to snow mid-Autumn, and Christmas was sprinkled with the extra magic of it, very much like on the Christmas cards. Braving the cold, during the night, Father Christmas would alight on the balcony, push open the door our parents had assured us they would leave a tiny bit open, and which he would close on his way out, once he had delivered our presents. Not much could come close to the feeling of happy anticipation children felt that night. The lucky ones, that is.

It occurred to me years later that one function of the réveillon was to keep children up so they wouldn't wake up in the middle of the night, ready to start the day. It worked usually, and Christmas Day started around 7.30 (which as any parent will tell you is pretty good going). When everyone was up – in a matter of minutes – we could look at our presents at last: you could hardly see our shoes! what excitement, what surprises! How did Father Christmas know what we had wished for? Even our parents had presents, but never anything very exciting: who wants perfume, a new jumper or more chocolates? Well, maybe the chocolates... A bit later, after breakfast, we went outside for some fresh air; only rain could keep us indoors. Fresh air was invested with magic virtues and you could never have enough of it. If you met any friends, you'd talk about your presents – some boasted, some didn't need to, others were more subdued. Some brought out their new

sledge for its maiden slide, or a toy to show. We wore new hats and gloves, new snow boots. Before long, made hungry by the fresh air no doubt, we went home: it was time to eat again!

When I grew up I realised what a feat all this represented for my parents. Both came from poor families and had been children during the second World War. My mother especially had suffered badly from hunger, first as a refugee fleeing from the bombardments in her region in the East, and then during the ensuing years of poverty. She told me how when she was seven years old, on Christmas morning, she had found in her shoe a small wooden doll wearing a blue dress (all made by her mother) and an orange. She hadn't expected anything at all and was happy with those gifts. Every aspect of the orange had delighted her. Her brother, my uncle, stockpiled food all his life. We were brought up not to take many things for granted.

It was sad when the tree started to dry up and shed needles that got stuck in our clothes and socks. The magic season was drawing to a close, but Winter would continue for months yet.

I followed most of these traditions with my own family.

## **Christine**

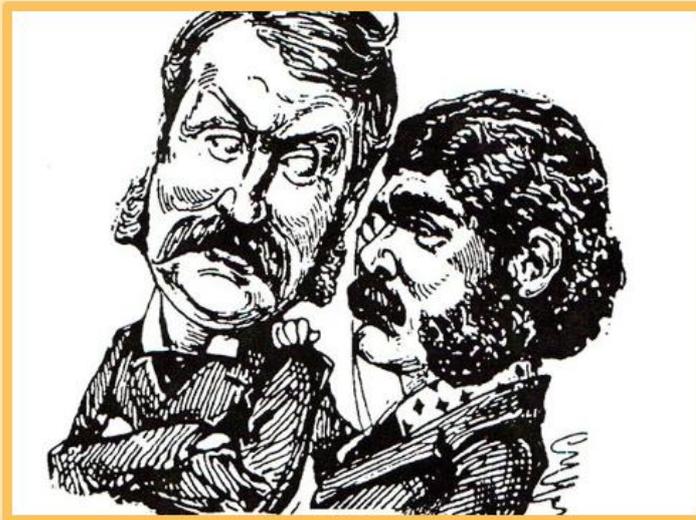


Dates for your Diary – all queries to [groups@iowu3a.uk](mailto:groups@iowu3a.uk)

January 2021				
4 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	4:00	Spanish	Zoom
5 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	3:00	Reading	Zoom
6 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	1:30	Tea, Chat & Tech	Suspended
		5:00	Film Club	Zoom
7 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	2:00	Writers	tbc
8 <sup>th</sup>	Friday	2:00	Green Issues	tbc
11 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	4:00	Spanish	Zoom
14 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	2:00	The Heritage of Gilbert & Sullivan	Zoom
16 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	12:00	Garden Visit – Princess Beatrice Garden (Carisbrooke Castle)	
18 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	4:00	Spanish	Zoom
20 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	5:00	Film Club	Zoom
21 <sup>st</sup>	Thursday	2:00	Family History	Zoom
25 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	4:00	Spanish	Zoom
27 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	tbc	Beach Walk	Yarmouth

February 2021				
1 <sup>st</sup>	Monday	4:00	Spanish	Zoom
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Tuesday	3:00	Reading	Zoom
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Wednesday	5:00	Film Club	Zoom
4 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	2:00	Writers	tbc
8 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	4:00	Spanish	Zoom
10 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	2:00	Seed Swap	tbc
11 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	2:00	Speaker Meeting tbc	Zoom
15 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	4:00	Spanish	Zoom
17 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	1:30	Tea, Chat & Tech	tbc
		5:00	Film Club	Zoom
18 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	2:00	Family History	tbc
22 <sup>nd</sup>	Monday	4:00	Spanish	Zoom
24 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	12:00	Beach Walk	Ryde - Wootton

**The Heritage of Gilbert and Sullivan**  
**Thursday January 14<sup>th</sup> 2021**  
**On Zoom**  
**By Bernard Lockett**



A talk to show how Gilbert & Sullivan are an essential part of this country's cultural heritage and are the origins of today's musical theatre.

Begins with the historical background and then overall assessment of the shows; next a consideration of the vast amount of social and political comment within G&S and a wry look as to how nothing much has changed to the present day.

[www.u3awight.uk](http://www.u3awight.uk)

*2.00 pm. Zoom details will be sent out nearer the time!*