



The vU3A Newsletter

No.026 July 2011

❖ THE EDITOR SAYS..... ❖

I would like to thank those members who send in contributions for the Newsletter. Without them the Newsletter might appear rather repetitive. It would be good if they sometimes elicited a response from you, the readers, to let the writers know that you appreciate their efforts.

There have been several new pages on the wiki over the last few weeks.

Olive has introduced a 'Poetry Corner'. If you have a favourite poem that you would like to share please go there and post it, in edit mode, for the rest of us to enjoy.

Geoffrey has started a page in an attempt to explain to novices like me the mysteries of the iPhone and similar gadgets. He has also explained or is in the process of explaining how to upload a video onto the wiki. This could have great possibilities for us in learning situations.

If you are interested in drawing there is a page called 'Drawing with Charcoal' with a link to 'Raw Materials' and 'Exploring the Media'.

Have you read any good books lately? Please share your appreciation of them with us on the 'Books Brilliant Books' page.

Looking from my window this morning I was lucky enough to see a Thames Barge in full sail silhouetted black against the silver river. These barges are few and far between now but there is an annual barge race along the River Medway from where I live, around the point and up the River Thames. They gather here from wherever they are berthed for the rest of the year. Most, if not all, are privately owned now and are often the homes of the people who sail them. It is wonderful to watch and a great satisfaction to me that this tradition is being kept alive by dedicated 'bargees'.

Kate – Deputy Editor



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**The deadline for copy for the next Newsletter is Sunday 24th July
Please submit to Kate**

CHAIR'S CORNER

With the AGM over, the committee, has had a reshuffle as follows:

Chair - Linda Clark

Vice-Chair - Paul Baron

Secretary – to be appointed

Treasurer – to be appointed

Membership – Cecilia Norman

Newsletter – Kate Western and Mike Williams

Technical Support – Peter Johnston and John Pettifer

Committee Member – Olive Davies

Thanks must go to Paul for all he has achieved during his time as Chair of the Steering Group and subsequently the committee of vU3A. Paul's wish is to continue on the committee but spend more time on vU3A technical issues e.g. making videos. If you have not done so already please watch the video and tell us what you think of it.

Go to www.vu3a.org and click on



Four resolutions were passed at the AGM. The constitution has already been updated to take account of the change required. The other three resolutions are being discussed by small working parties set up by the committee. Working Party progress and outcomes will be reported as they become available.

Please get in touch if you have any queries or questions.

Linda

SWELLING THE RANKS

Hoping to recruit more new members for our Virtual U3A, a small band of volunteers are currently working through a list of terrestrial U3As with active websites, making contact with the Webmaster or Chairman of each. The idea is to request these U3As to carry a short piece about vU3A and thus spread the word amongst some of the 800 U3As and 250,000 members up and down the country. The work is ongoing and it is hoped will result in a marked increase in our membership, although the effect may take a while to show up. Any queries or comments about this initiative to me, please: Mike Williams

JUST IN CASE

Just in case you didn't know (or had forgotten!), the Virtual U3A has a website where all kinds of information is available for prospective members. Even enrolled members might find something of interest there. The website is:

<http://vu3a.org>

Now, here's the important part: When did you last introduce a prospective member to this website? Have you asked anyone at all to mention it in a newsletter? Have you seen whether your local library, GP surgery, AgeUK shop, etc. would put up a little notice? There must be dozens of ways to promote the Virtual U3A.

Every little helps!

HANDY COMPUTING TIP No.007

Would you like to see a bit more of a website you are visiting? This works in Internet Explorer and Firefox (don't know about any others).

Just press the F11 key - the menus and other stuff will disappear, allowing more of the web page to be seen. Pressing the F11 key again will restore the status quo.

TO ALL MEMBERS: CHANGES TO YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

If any of your contact details should change - **in particular your email address** - please let the Membership Secretary know, currently Cecilia Norman.

TO ALL MEMBERS: RENEWALS

If you have received your membership renewal notice and have not yet responded will you do so straight away, please, so that our books can be brought up to date? Thank you.

THE NATIONAL U3A WEBSITE

Just in case there is anyone reading this who has not yet (a) visited the Third Age Trust's website or (b) having visited it, not succeeded in registering for the members only areas, here are some pointers.

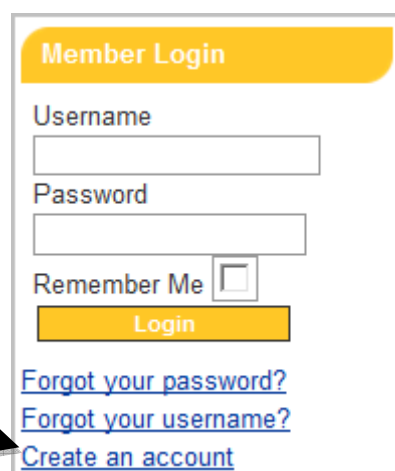
FINDING THE WEBSITE

- ❖ Go to www.u3a.org.uk
- ❖ The home page is constantly updated with the latest statistics for the totals of U3As and members nationwide and that could be of interest to some of you.
- ❖ To the left on the home page is a clickable list of other pages to visit. The illustration to the right shows a part of this list. The general public can access any of these areas, while other areas are reserved for registered users.



REGISTERING FOR THE MEMBERS' AREAS

- ❖ Look over to the right of the home page and you will see where to log in. The illustration shows what to look for. You should type in your Username and Password, then click on **Login**. But what if you don't have a username or password? You will need to 'create an account'. Start by clicking on those words.
- ❖ What ensues will be self-explanatory. The only personal details you will be asked for are name and email address.
- ❖ You will also create the Username and Password for future use. **It's for you to choose what these are.**
- ❖ Then you click on a button labelled **Register** and that completes the process.
- ❖ Once you are logged on, you will be able to see a new menu on the right-hand side that wasn't visible before called **U3A Member Menu**. You will now be able to access areas that were not available to you previously.



Member Login

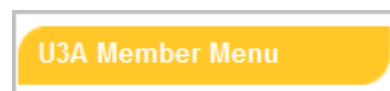
Username

Password

Remember Me

Login

[Forgot your password?](#)
[Forgot your username?](#)
[Create an account](#)



AN ENIGMA - A VISIT TO BLETCHLEY

After a relatively easy journey via the 'roundabouts' of Milton Keynes the coach arrived mid-



morning and we were treated to morning coffee in Bletchley Park Mansion.

Not our guide!!

Our very knowledgeable guide gave us the itinerary for the day and we were off!

First stop was the onsite working Post Office and then on to the stable yard containing the cottages, converted from a tack and feed house, where early work in 1939 on Enigma was performed by Dilly Knox, John Jeffreys and Alan Turing. Due to overcrowding prefabricated wooden huts were erected (18 were built) of which Hut 1 housed the Wireless Station and as we moved from hut to hut it was obvious that most were in a sad state of repair.....not surprisingly after such a long time. In Hut 11 a mock up of a Bombe was displayed, with its complicated (!) patch panel, which greatly helped speed up the work.

In addition to the huts there were a number of brick built blocks, one H Block (now the National Museum of Computing) houses the Colossus Mark 2, a machine (computer!) that helped

break German encryption during



World War II, which has been rebuilt by Tommy Flowers and is functioning once again!



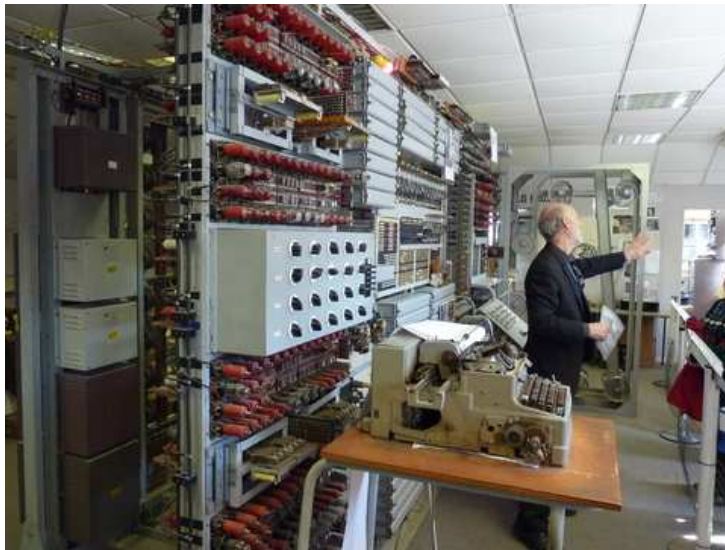
Back in the main house lunch was served and some free time to wander around the grounds in the warm sunshine.

A number of modern buildings contained a variety of displays such as the Winston Churchill Exhibit, Projected Picture Trust (vintage cinema equipment) , Bletchley Park Garage (vintage cars) including one that showed a rebuild of the Bombe device together with original Enigma machines, Enigma Rotor Boxes and the like.

After afternoon tea/coffee we embarked our coach and all agreed it had been a very interesting and

humbling visit to see where it all had happened...

John P



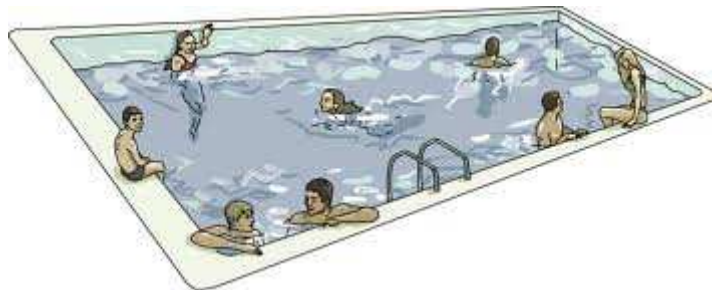
Rotor Boxes

All Enigma machines operate with internal rotors, each wired differently. Most machines were equipped with alternative rotors, which would be swapped in or out of the machine when required by the directions in the "code-book".



HAS THA GORRANY BADGES?

TARZAN. During my boyhood, Johnny Weismuller Olympic swimming champion turned film star, played the eponymous hero of the old black and white series of Tarzan The Apeman. How we boys tried to emulate him. We would climb trees and, swinging perilously from branch to branch would endeavour to imitate his ‘aah–aah–aah’ yodelling call, as we scrambled ever upwards towards our imaginary tree top dwellings and our Janes. My Jane was a brown haired ringletted lass in my class at Junior School. She wore a bright red blazer with brass buttons. For her I would gladly have climbed the highest mountain, or swum the widest river. This latter heroic was usually enacted at Thurnscoe swimming baths. I would race to the end of the springboard, and dive to the bottom of the pool, where lay the weighted wooden diving block. In my fertile imagination this represented a giant crocodile, about to swim menacingly upwards to seize my Jane who, for some unspecified reason, lay floating helplessly upon the surface. Grasping this monster in both hands I would wriggle and wrestle with it like a demented eel until, in imminent danger of bursting a lung I would be forced to the surface. Here (in imagination) I would grasp my terrified Jane to my ‘manly’ bosom and bring her safely to the river bank. It was at this juncture that



the make believe invariably ended. I had not yet reached the age of knowing what to do with a grateful damsel I had just rescued from an awful fate.

Alas, I never did reach the Olympic swimming standard required to have had any hope of succeeding Johnny Weismuller. Nor did I ever reap a reward from a grateful Jane for rescuing her from some dire peril.

Sadly, I must confess, that during the course of the whole year we were in the same class I cannot recall that I ever spoke to her. And after leaving Junior School I never saw my little red blazered, brown haired, ringletted Jane again.

More years than I care to count have passed by since those boyhood days but I still enjoy a swim. And not long ago I had a brief encounter with a juvenile character who, I am convinced, could be a Johnny Weismuller of the future.

I had finished my swim, had a shower, and returned to my cubicle. Having dried myself and applied talcum powder to the ancient bits and pieces, and partially dressed, I took my swimming trunks to a nearby tap in order to rinse them out. Intent on avoiding splashes onto my slacks I became aware of a shrill young voice

emanating from a nearby cubicle and aimed in my direction.

‘Hey Mester!’ Turning, I spotted the damp tousled head of a small boy of about seven or eight peering round the corner of the end cubicle.

‘What’s tha washing thi trunks for?’ he enquired. Followed, without pause. ‘They’ll get wet when tha guzzint t’watter.’ I digested this profound observation and, with what I

considered admirable aplomb replied. ‘I’ve already been in’t t’watter.’ Tousle head pondered for a moment, then, with irrefutable logic riposted, ‘Then what’s tha washin’ ‘em for?’ The habit of a lifetime prevailed, and I

explained in my best schoolmasterly manner that the water in the pool had, for health reasons, a chemical called chlorine put into it, and if one didn’t wash out one’s trunks they might become rather smelly.

‘Wouldn’t want to be called Stinky would you?’ I concluded, in that pseudo jocular tone schoolmasters develop when addressing small boys.

His Nibs considered this for a moment, obviously unimpressed.

‘Ant tha gorra washin’ machine then at your house?’

‘Of course we have,’ I replied. ‘Why?’ ‘Cos my Mam washes my trunks in ours,’ he replied triumphantly.

As Eric Morecambe would have said,

‘There’s no answer to that.’ I continued with my rinsing. My inquisitor withdrew into his cubicle.

Turning off the tap I began to squeeze



out my trunks, when Tousle Head reappeared.

‘How far can tha swim?’ He wanted to know this time. ‘Oh, about twenty lengths on a good day,’ I answered with becoming modesty.

Nonchalantly, he came back with, ‘I can do a mile.’ I expressed suitable admiration.

‘Has tha gorrany badges?’ He next wanted to know. ‘I’m afraid not.’ I had to admit. ‘Have you?’ Positively oozing with superiority, Tousle Head emerged from his cubicle, white, skinny and starkers; holding up for my inspection a pair of miniscule trunks, literally covered front, side and rear, with an assortment of

badges representing, presumably, every swimming attainment under the sun.

‘I’ve gorranothor one for me Mam to sew on.’ he declared. ‘She’ll have a job on to find a space on those trunks,’ I said. My voice conveying profound admiration of his prowess. ‘She will wait she.’ He oozed self satisfaction, and disappeared back into his cubicle.

Giving my trunks a final squeeze and about to depart I remembered, and addressed the invisible presence. ‘I did pass the Bronze Medal exam. of the Royal Life Saving Society a long time ago, I’m sure I must have a badge for that.’

He didn’t deign to reply. Obviously, anybody of my advanced years with only one badge to his name was not in his league.

Suitably chastened I departed. But I was laughing inside.

To me he was Touse Head, I never thought to ask his name. Ten years on, watching an Olympics swimming event, I might, unknowingly, have

seen him racing down the pool going for gold.

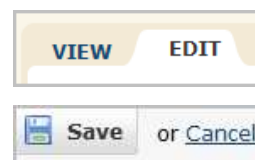
Eric

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO WIKI PAGES

[Your Group Leader/Convenor may have specific suggestions or requirements, otherwise the following notes apply generally to all wiki pages.]

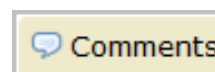
A wiki page is a communal document where members of the group collaborate in posting their contributions. Usually the page consists of two sections. We can think of the first section as being the home for the group's learning activity, while the second section can serve more as a general chat area for socialising (what these days is commonly referred to as 'social networking').

The first section (the communal page itself) **can be edited** and is generally used for contributions relevant to the nature of the group. To make an entry, you click on the Edit tab, top left of the page (illustrated), then type in much the same way as you would when word processing. When you have finished, you will need to click on the Save button which is to be found at the foot of the screen.



You can also add pictures to this first section (as can be clearly seen by visiting the Photography Group). Have a look at this page <http://vu3a.pbworks.com/How-to-upload-images> for some notes on how it is done. (These notes are shortly due to be refined and expanded.)

The second section, called **Comments**, is found immediately after the contributions in the first section. Here is where you make, well, comments on other people's contributions. Comments are not intended to form part of the main activity as such. To make a comment, press the End key or scroll right down until you reach a box labelled **Add a Comment**. Type your comment in the box and click the **Add Comment** button. Careful! Comments **cannot be edited**. Pictures cannot be added in the **Comments** section.



If you need further help, please see **Useful Contacts** on the last page of this newsletter.

GROUPS

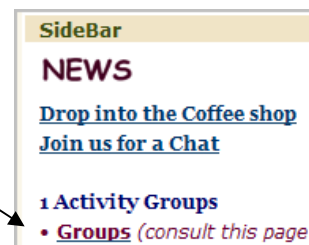
At the heart of the U3A and vU3A ethos lies the concept of the **interest group**. Because the range of potential interest groups is so vast, there is no way to define this simply, other than as the focus for those with similar interests to come together and pursue their learning in an informal and friendly way. A visit to **Carlisle & District U3A**

(www.carlisle-u3a.org.uk) will give an idea of the rich variety of activities typically open to U3A members. Here, at the vU3A, we seek to encourage the notion of the informal interest group. It is what makes vU3A unique and what sets it apart from many other education providers and social networking websites.

vU3A is always on the lookout for fresh ideas and for volunteers to convene or lead new groups. If you have any suggestions or would like to take a more active role of this nature, please get in touch with any of the names on the USEFUL CONTACTS list on the last page of this Newsletter.

HOW TO FIND THE VU3A GROUPS

Once you are logged in to vu3a.pbworks.com simply click on the word **Groups** in the SideBar to the right of the wiki screen. From then on, follow your nose!



DIRECTORY OF GROUPS

Would all Group Leaders/Convenors please contact Mike Williams about changes you would like made to the information in this Directory.

(NB This information is liable to change at short notice.)

The following groups were alive and kicking when this issue went to press:

ART APPRECIATION (Contact: Olive)

Art Appreciation covers a wide range of topics e.g. What do you like and why? Exhibitions, films and the work of individual artists will all be discussed.

BOOKS BRILLIANT BOOKS (Contact: TBA)

The page for booklovers, a place to recommend a good read, to discuss a recent novel, to make friends with bibliophiles from all over.

ENCOURAGE US TO READ (Contact: TBA)

Another page for booklovers. There are plans to amalgamate this page with BOOKS BRILLIANT BOOKS. [At the time of going to press it was unclear where things stood.]

BRIDGE (Contact: Mike)

Find out, by clicking on this link, how to play or watch others playing bridge online.

CRAFTS (Contact: Chris)

There are many of us who enjoy crafting, keeping the old crafts going and investigating new ones and we can share our knowledge.

CREATIVE WRITING (Contact: Ian)

Members submit their own prose or poetry.

FAMILY HISTORY (Contact: Chris)

Many of us are interested in our family origins, and with the Internet it is so much easier to research. Sharing knowledge and knowhow we can get further - still waiting to find a hidden connection between two of our members.

FOOD AND DRINK (Contact: Cecilia)

Recipes, shopping, restaurants, diet, food science, travel - you name it - this is open house for all those interested in such topics.

GARDENS (Contact: Linda)

If you would like advice, help, want to pass on information that you have found useful or anything about gardens or garden history that you have found interesting please join us.

HISTORY (Contact: Elizabeth)

The current topic is **The Ten Terrible Taxes** (see under **History and the Present**). There's another page on commemorative names. Note also the link to **Local History**.

INTERNET FORUM (Contact: Geoffrey)

The Internet Forum can provide support for members so they can take full advantage of what the internet has to offer.

LE CAFÉ FRANÇAIS (Contact: Allen)

Chat in French. **Le Café Français is open to all**. The link can be found on the **Coffee Shop** page.

PHILOSOPHY (Contact:)

Some people consider that Philosophy is a very learned subject. Nothing can be further from the truth. We are all philosophers in one way or another whether we like it or not. This gives us all the right to express our experience.

PICTURES, CAMERAS & SOFTWARE (Contact: John P)

Aims to help members to better understand how to get the best from Digital Photography and the use made of PC based software programs such as Picasa.

PICTURE PUZZLE CORNER (Contact: Peter)

Come and see if you can recognise the pictures shown, put some up yourself! It's just a bit of fun.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY Q & A (Contact: Ian)

A collaborative area for asking and answering a variety of questions.

TELL US A STORY - WINDMILLERS (Contact: John W)

Not an active group as such but a look back at the work of an early group of 'guinea pigs' when the Virtual U3A was still on the drawing board. Worth a look.

TOPIC OF THE DAY (Contact: Ian)

Offerings of daily topics on which to comment.

WATCHING THE NATURAL WORLD (Contact: Mike)

This is a group for nature lovers and weather watchers. Of particular interest are some striking photographs uploaded by members. Let's have a few more!

WATERCOLOUR PAINTING (Contact: Linda)

Watercolour painting for all - beginners welcome. All queries welcome. Practical activities available.

15th OF THE MONTH CLUB (Contact: Mike)

Drop in around the middle of the month and leave a diary entry. Add your contribution to this monthly snapshot of third age living.

OTHER ACTIVITIES BESIDES THE GROUPS

Take a good look at what's available from the SideBar (that panel on the right of your wiki screen). The **Coffee Shop** is one of the most active areas, a place to meet other members and exchange chat and opinions on this and that.

There's quite a bit more. Just explore by clicking on the various links.

If you are interested in starting a group but feel that you need help or support to get up and running please contact Linda.

FLASH MEETINGS

FlashMeetings are just one of the ways in which Virtual U3A members can communicate with one another. Designed by a team at the Open University, this online videoconferencing facility can be seen at

flashmeeting.open.ac.uk

Click on the link labelled **EA-TEL FM Server** and then you can click on the **About** link to learn all about the FlashMeeting features.

There is no charge for using FM and no software to install. Everything takes place over the Internet. Users need to have audio and (ideally) video facilities on their home computer.

A full set of notes can be found at fm.ea-tel.eu/quickstart.html

Someone has to set up a meeting and others are then invited to join the meeting by following a link to it that the meeting organiser will circulate.

Help and advice can be sought from any of our **Useful Contacts** on the last page of this newsletter. There is also a page of support notes on our own vU3A wiki at <http://vu3a.pbworks.com/w/page/35214688/Flash-Meetings>

IF YOU ARE NEW TO THE vU3A

(or even if you are not)

You may like to know more about the U3A movement in the UK. Here are three suggestions for a bit of further reading.

- The national U3A website - www.u3a.org.uk
- A file about the **History of U3A** for which we have provided a link in the wiki SideBar
- www.u3a.org.uk/local-u3a-website-list.html Here you will be able to browse a list of all UK U3As that maintain a website. Visits at random to any of these websites will give a clear picture of what different U3As get up to. **Carlisle & District U3A** is a good place to start (www.carlisle-u3a.org.uk)

U3A stands for the University of the Third Age, which is a self-help organisation for people no longer in full time employment providing educational, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment. It consists of local U3As all over the UK, which are charities in their own right and are run entirely by volunteers. Local U3As are learning cooperatives which draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills of their own members to organise and provide interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership.

And vU3A (Virtual U3A) is just one more U3A but is uniquely located online rather than being terrestrially based. One of its principal aims is to provide the U3A experience for those who are rendered isolated in some way by circumstances or geography.

AND FINALLY, JUST FOR FUN.....

We asked last month whether you knew a word that begins and ends with the letters **und**?

How about **UNDERGROUND**?

Now for this month's puzzler: There is an 11-letter English word that I wouldn't mind betting the majority of you pronounce incorrectly. Any idea what it might be?

USEFUL CONTACTS

The following members have agreed to serve members of the vU3A in a support capacity. Please feel free to email them for help or advice.

Paul Baron:

Peter Johnston

petervu3a@btinternet.com

John Pettifer:

john.pettifer@gmail.com

Duncan Tribute:

HAVE A GOOD MONTH!

This edition was compiled by Mike Williams