



## **Editorial**

Welcome to the seventh edition of our new style newsletter. In this issue, there is an Interest Groups update and lots more interesting contributions from members.

Thank you to everybody who has contributed so far. Please keep sending in your contributions. It looks like there will be several more newsletter editions to come! Send text and pictures to [news@poyntonu3a.org.uk](mailto:news@poyntonu3a.org.uk).

## **Poynton U3A**

### **Interest Groups Update**

Spanish and Photography are continuing with their virtual meetings and German Conversation are about to have their second virtual meeting.

The Geology group are receiving emails with news and articles and Bird Watching members are being sent emails with news, reports and photos from members.

Reading Group 1 are reading their own books and getting together on group emails to comment/keep in touch. Reading Group 2 meet every Monday on Skype for a chat and to recommend books to each other. The Needlecraft Group are in regular contact.

The Creative Writing group are still writing and sending their material to each other. As you will have seen, several of their musings make it into the newsletter.

Table Tennis members are being sent emails most weeks with news and even the occasional quiz and Walking Netball are keeping in contact with their pre-virus WhatsApp group.

### **Keeping in Touch**

Our Volunteer Coordinators (Jayne and Sandra) have been ringing round members who had not previously provided an email address and several more members have supplied addresses so we can keep in touch with more people in these “different” times.

However, if you know of any U3A member who is feeling isolated and not on email, please contact them to let them know that they can phone Jayne or Sandra to be added to our telephone list.

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## Members' Contributions

### Thank You Epiphany

Lockdown. What a funny thing. A terminology not usually used for everyday living. The thought of having to stay in, not see your family or friends or hug someone is completely alien. When we do go out, we have to "social distance"! Almost everything has closed and shopping has become difficult. Children cannot go to school and many older people are finding it extremely hard and very lonely.

Human nature is strong though and communities have united to help each other. Residents of many streets have got together and formed help groups. Many of these have now become friendship and social groups with everybody coming out to clap for key workers, celebrate Easter and have social distance street parties for VE Day. We have discovered how to be good neighbours again.

Our road is no different and a very strong support group now exists. I do not think anyone could have foreseen the community spirit that was to happen. The support has been amazing and has made for a real community. But, the icing on the cake has been from members of Epiphany, a group of very talented professional musicians, who have played for us at every opportunity. Their first 'performance' was a Thursday evening when we went outside to clap for key workers. They played "Somewhere over the Rainbow", and it continued every Thursday but one, when it rained! That was not all though. They put on a wonderful concert for VE Day with households sitting in their front gardens, drinking tea or wine, eating scones and listening to wonderful music. They offered to play for birthdays, and touched the hearts of four to eighty-year olds, playing tunes from Frozen, Christmas, films and Irish jigs. A wonderful boost, as isolation means no parties, family or friends to help celebrate the occasion. A final concert on Saturday was just wonderful. Music of every genre was played - swing, films and even teddy bears picnic. An hour of glorious sounds. Along with all of that Richard has been putting together music and pictures for us to enjoy at the weekend. It is on the internet and can be viewed on YouTube by all. Here are the words of some of the residents - "wonderful place to live", "fortunate to be living on a road with such supportive and friendly neighbours", "very proud to live on here" and "we're privileged to be bringing our kids up in such a great community". And many more. So "Thank you Epiphany". You have reminded us what a community is.

### Jo Leach

*As a result of the Epiphany video in the last edition, the following was received in an email from Joy Epstein.*

"I particularly enjoyed the musical video and have been singing along to it, sitting at my dining table with my tablet on a stand! As someone who actually lived through the war years, being 7 when it started and 13 when VE Day happened, this year's commemorative events have been of special interest.

My older sister was working in Manchester at the time of the Blitz, Christmas 1940, and walked into Manchester from our home in Audenshaw the morning afterwards, as the buses had stopped running, where she was met by the city ablaze. She was just short of 15 and spent the next few hours serving tea and biscuits to the hard-working fire fighters who were trying to save as much as they could. It is something she will never forget, as you can imagine."

## Poynton Snake of Stones



## Ode to Joy

Oh, to sit in the garden and read a book now that summer appears to be starting. Although things need doing; the grass should be cut, the hedges trimmed and plants re-potted. After that there is still the watering, which has been endless already, because we have had the driest spring on record. So, to immerse one's self in an author's words in a different time and place can be quite therapeutic.

Until the fifty-year old sound of Simon and Garfunkel comes drifting across, interspersed with a football being kicked and kids squealing. On top of that, there is the smell of neighbours' cremating animal products alfresco: don't these people have ovens in their

kitchens? If only we were not in lockdown or is it lockup, we, or they, could go somewhere else: unfortunately, we would encounter the same problems.

Maybe we should live on an island, miles away from the rest of the world and Covid-19, without the eight discs, just my book. On top of all that, my neighbour has decided to take this opportunity to paint the outside of his house, which doesn't make much noise but the smell drifts across to annoy me, not because I don't like the smell of paint, but it makes me feel guilty that I am not doing something similar, even though I don't have the energy, inclination or enthusiasm. After dinner when some of the heat has dispersed barbeques have cooled, children are watching television or in bed you hear the strains of "Greensleeves" chiming out from the ice cream van.

All those activities do seem to be temperature specific. Today was not so sunny and as a result about four or five degrees cooler. No music, ball games or outside cooking. All very peaceful but we still had "Greensleeves". This happened to be a Thursday so at eight o'clock clapping on the pavement with some bell ringing now has to be accompanied by fireworks.

One last thought, why does it seem that a proportion of the populace need to be connected permanently to relatives, friends or music? Whether just walking themselves or with children or dogs; what is wrong with silence? Yes, I know I am an old curmudgeon but it is being miserable that keeps me so happy.

## **Clive B Hill**

A couple of poems from **Ian Beverley**.

### **The New 'Abnormal'**

Will city offices be required,  
As more of us work at home,  
Will shopping streets stay empty,  
As tourists refuse to roam?

Will factories use more robots,  
As humans stay at distance,  
Will we all have to vaccinate,  
As Corona preys on mischance?

Will the country - nay, the world,  
Repay the debt incurred,  
Will social care be afforded,  
As recession is recurred?

The prospects of young people,  
Are looking somewhat poor,  
Will full-time jobs be prevalent,  
Or zero-hours be more?

Whatever trail we journey,  
No matter how we think,  
We won't need to go to Durham,  
Just walk down for a drink!

## Corona Contrasts

Containment, not contentment -  
No family, friends to call,  
Sporadic trips to food shops,  
Will this go on 'til Fall?

Birdsong seems much louder,  
Time to watch plants grow,  
Search for jobs to conquer,  
Precious lawns to mow.

Children are true victims,  
No school or friends around,  
Trying to do some homework,  
New hobbies, games are found.

Staying strong together,  
Helping where we can,  
Telephone's essential -  
Respecting travel ban.

## Pictures from our Perambulations

A couple more chick pics with coot chicks in reflective mood.



Perhaps they were wondering why they have such strangely-shaped feet.



A coot's feet have distinctive lobed flaps of skin on the toes which act in the same way as webbed feet when swimming but are well suited to walking on soft, uneven surfaces, such as mud and water plants.

## The Problem with Calendars – Part 1 - The Julian Calendar

Nowadays we take our calendar for granted. It gives us reliable information on the annual cycle of the year, the arrival of spring, summer, autumn and winter, the division into months, weeks and days. It can highlight annual events such as birthdays and public holidays. We know that there are 365 days in a year but occasionally another day is added in February in order to keep the calendar in line with the Earth's movement around the sun. However, it took human beings a long time to identify the number of days in the year, even longer to realise that a small error in the calculation might very soon mean that it was not really helping much with one of its prime purposes – to inform us of the time of the year for planting and harvesting.

Perhaps not surprisingly there have been a large number of attempts to create a satisfactory calendar. The one which is now used almost universally throughout the world can be traced back to the efforts of Julius Caesar to introduce a reliable working calendar to replace the one which Romans used and which had become out of line with the seasons – about 2½ months out of line!

After bringing the seasons into line by extending the year 46 BC to 445 days, the first new year of Julius Caesar's calendar began in 45 BC. Except that as far as he was concerned that was not the case. There was no such thing as BC just as there was no such thing as AD. Christ had not yet been born. What year did Caesar think it was? The Romans had been using a 12-month calendar for many years. They measured it from the foundation of the city of Rome (*Ab Urbe Condita* - AUC). This method was used by Roman historians to determine the number of years from one event to another. (The everyday method used by the Romans to identify a year was to name it after the two most senior officials "consuls" who took office in it.) Julius Caesar would have known 46 BC as 708 AUC. The new calendar had 365 days whereas the old one had 355. It also had a leap year every 4 years,

As we run out of our BC dates at 1 BC and we run into what we now call AD dates at 1 AD, a counting problem occurs. Here's what happens. Juliana is a girl who was born on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2 BC. How old will she be on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2 AD? 2+2 normally equals 4 but in this case it doesn't - 2+2=3. Juliana has her first birthday on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1 BC, her second on

10<sup>th</sup> January 1 AD and she has her third on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2 AD. What's happened? The simple answer is that there was no 0 (zero) BC/AD. Babylonian and Indian mathematicians had accepted there was a number zero. Greeks and Romans hadn't. Shades of this difficulty can still be seen in the omnipresent "qwerty" keyboard which I am using. The numerical line at the top should begin with the number zero. Instead 0 follows 9 and is very (too?) close to the letter o.

That's not the only difficulty. The Roman system of counting was "inclusive". A Roman would say that Wednesday was the second day after Tuesday (not the first day or next day). They started counting with the start day as 1. So 15<sup>th</sup> May was the 11<sup>th</sup> day after the 5<sup>th</sup> May – not our ten days.

We don't use inclusive counting but there still remain vestiges of it in other modern languages. At school I was taught that *quatorze* was 14 and *quinze* was 15 in French. But a fourteen-day English fortnight is *quinze jours* or *quinzième* in French (15 days). And if I were in Germany *von heute in acht Tagen* (from here in 8 days) would be in a week's time – which is only 7 days for us!

Although 365¼ days was a very good calculation for the length of a year, it was not perfect. As the decades passed into centuries, the actual date of the spring equinox fell noticeably earlier than the assumed calendar date of 21<sup>st</sup> March.

**David Sewart**

## What were those significant buildings?



For those of you who have not determined the location of this first picture, it is in the wall running alongside Poynton Pool on London Road North. It was a water source. At present it appears as a drinking trough but on old maps it is labelled as a fountain. A little further along the road towards Hazel Grove is what the majority of us will remember as a council storage area. However, some time before that the area contained the Crescent Inn which was a staging post for the Manchester to London stagecoaches. Prior to being the location of the Crescent Inn, this area was a coal yard. You will remember (as mentioned in the quiz question answers in edition 3 of the new style newsletters) that this used to be the centre of the original Poynton village so it is possible that the drinking fountain was the only water source for the original village.



The second structure is contained in the garden of the bungalow in Towers Road as you turn right out of South Park Drive. The first reference I found indicated that this was the entrance to the ice-house belonging to Poynton Towers with the idea that the ice storage rooms themselves were thought to extend under the roadway and part of the field on the opposite side.



However subsequent reading indicates that the entrance to the ice-house is in the field opposite the bungalow. The ice-house was re-excavated around 1989 and became a listed building in 1991. For further information see the book *Poynton: A Coalmining Village* and the Historic England listing. The Historic England entry indicates it is a Grade II listed building and contains a detailed description of the structure but no mention of an entrance on the other side of Towers Road. To obtain the answer “The entrance to the ice-house” the picture should be as shown on the left.

So, if it wasn't the entrance to the ice-house, what might the first picture show. **Clive Hill** has some observations about halls and ice-houses.

Poynton, in the past, had a series of Halls, preceded by a Manor House, all of which were in the vicinity of the present park. These buildings were not completely separate enterprises as the original Manor House morphed into the first Poynton Hall, with the addition of extension and wings being added over about two hundred years.

Probably about the time the first Hall acquired its name it also could boast an icehouse; which holds the title of a scheduled ancient monument. It is located in the field opposite to the junction of Towers Road and South Park Drive. The icehouse has been excavated, or cleaned out might be a better description of the activity that took place. Apparently it is somewhat unique, as there had been a food preparation area inside, as well as cold storage.

There was a rumour that a tunnel went under Towers Road but it seems that is a slight exaggeration and that there was a water pipe under the road from a field tank and gravel pits on the left hand side of the footpath crossing the field on the north side of Towers Road, supplying water to the Towers.

## Things to Do

More quiz questions from Hooha.

1. Who were the grandmothers of King Henry VIII?
2. Name the breed of black horses used in the Lloyds Bank Advertisements
3. Who designed the Spitfire aircraft?
4. Name the square building which was built during the reign of William the Conqueror and formed the original part of the Tower of London
5. Jeff Lynne and Bob Dylan are the two survivors of the five members of which group, formed in 1988?

Answers to the quiz in the previous edition

1. What is the name of the midlands city once known as the Detroit of England?  
*Coventry*

2. What was the trade of a fletcher?

*He made arrows.*

3. What was the original purpose of Lyme Cage?

*The Cage was built as a hunting lodge where the ladies could safely watch the hunt across Lyme Park, before being joined by the men for a meal, then as a park-keepers cottage and later as a lock-up for prisoners.*

4. Who in The Lords defeated Lord Vernon in his aim to build a canal through Poynton to carry his coal to Stockport, and Macclesfield and Knutsford?

*The Duke of Bridgewater*

5. What did Mr McGregor do with Peter Rabbit's little blue coat after Peter lost it while being chased in the garden?

*Mr McGregor hung up Peter's coat and little shoes as a scarecrow to frighten the blackbirds.*

Sudoku No 7

1	4							
			7		3		2	
		2			1		6	
6				2		7		
5		4					3	
					7	4	8	
4	2			5			7	
					8	1		
3	6							

Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9

Below is the solution to No 6

7	5	2	6	1	3	9	4	8
4	8	6	2	9	5	3	7	1
1	3	9	4	8	7	6	5	2
5	6	4	3	7	1	8	2	9
3	1	8	9	5	2	4	6	7
9	2	7	8	4	6	5	1	3
2	9	3	7	6	4	1	8	5
6	7	5	1	3	8	2	9	4
8	4	1	5	2	9	7	3	6

## Internet Culture

### The National Theatre

Finishing at 7pm on June 11<sup>th</sup> - Coriolanus, by William Shakespeare, starring Tom Hiddleston.

Starting at 7pm on June 11<sup>th</sup> - The Madness of George III by Alan Bennett, starring Mark Gatiss.

A reminder courtesy of Elaine Roe that the BBC's Culture in Quarantine scheme is continuing. The RSC's production of *Romeo and Juliet* was broadcast on BBC Four at 9pm on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June (so Catch Up). Other shows that will be broadcast on BBC Four in June include *Hamlet* with Paapa Essiedu and *Macbeth* with Christopher Ecclestone and Niamh Cusack, with dates to be confirmed.

## Internet Science & Technology

### Jodrell Bank – Science Learning at Home

As part of Science Learning at Home, Jodrell Bank are providing a series of talks and lectures. These include :-

- Six lectures from their popular and long-running Lovell Lecture series in which leading scientists and researchers shared their knowledge and presented their latest data.
- The Lockdown Lectures, new from The University of Manchester, which invite some of the nation's foremost scientists, thinkers, historians and social commentators for some informal lectures from the comfort of your own home.
- Items from the DotTalks series, the bluedot festival's famous programme of talks, panel discussions and lectures that explore some of the biggest issues of our time.

Also look out for Science & Technology programmes being shown on BBC TV and which are subsequently available on iPlayer. Some examples are :-

- Chemistry – A Volatile History with Jim Al-Khalili
- Shock and Awe: The Story of Electricity also with Jim Al-Khalili
- Monkman & Seagull's Genius Adventures

For any of the above, simply go to your favourite Search Engine and enter the relevant topic.

## Town Council Information

The Town Council website has lots of information on its website -

[www.poyntontowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.poyntontowncouncil.gov.uk) and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/poyntontowncouncil/>

The list of local businesses who are able to deliver provisions, take-away meals and food to residents is still being updated by the Town Council and can be viewed or downloaded as a PDF at <https://bit.ly/2J8OWxL>.

## And finally – Welcome Home Kate

Readers of previous editions of the newsletter will remember the items by Kate Marham from New Zealand from where she has been unable to return for the last couple of months. We are pleased to report that Kate and husband Peter have now arrived back in Poynton.