



Poynton u3a News

poyntonu3a.org.uk

Issue 34-2

20th Jan 2021

Editorial

Welcome to the seventeenth edition of these electronic newsletters. Keep the contributions coming. Send them to news@poyntonu3a.org.uk.

Poynton u3a Update

Vaccinations

It is not possible to provide up-to-date information in the newsletter. However, the Middlewood Partnership do provide a blog which should keep you in touch with the vaccination process even if you don't live in the catchment area. The link is <https://middlewoodpartnership.co.uk/blog>. Also, as you will see from our Secretary's recent mailing, we will try to pick out important changes and notify you of these as they occur although we cannot be confident of catching every detail.

For details of community support during Covid-19 restrictions please access the Town Council website - www.poyntontowncouncil.gov.uk. There is a special section for clinically extremely vulnerable residents.

Scam Alert: Covid-19 vaccinations are free. Don't pay for one. Genuine sites will NOT ask for money or bank details.

Third Age Trust Magazine

The Third Age Trust produces a magazine called Third Age Matters which so far has been free to u3a members. You just have to pay the postage (£3.10 for 2020-21). There are five editions a year (April, June, September, November and February). At present there is a select group (that is, not many) who subscribe from Poynton. We don't yet have the details for this year but, if you would like to know the details when they become available, email membership@poyntonu3a.org.uk.

Poynton u3a Membership Renewal

Membership renewals are occurring at a steady pace.

Remember you need to renew your membership **immediately** if you are involved in any Interest Group activities (Real or Virtual) or want to continue to receive our Newsletter. Details were in the previous newsletter which is available on our website.

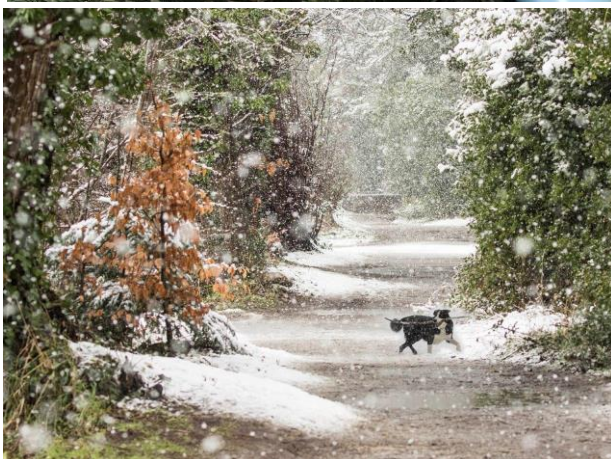
Photographic Group

At our January Zoom meeting we looked at some of the members' annual project photographs. The subjects to choose from were 'Passion for Five a Day' or a 'Passion for Anything' which gave us a wide scope to work from! In previous years we have each mounted our prints onto boards for display at one of our monthly meetings in the Civic Hall. This won't be possible this year. However, we are able to show you some of our monthly project work in the newsletter. In December the subject was 'Christmas' which gave us a wide choice for our photographs from food, decorations, lights, cards to snowy scenes.

We were given a short introduction by Janet to our January project which is church architecture. Due to the current lockdown, we will just be looking at external features.

Peter then gave us a presentation relating to our quarterly project which is all about the dominant colour in a photograph. Not necessarily the overall colour but the one which brings the photograph to life, makes it more interesting or eye catching.

Lyn announced the subject for our 2021 annual project which is 'The Alphabet in Photographs'. This could be quite challenging when we get to 'X' and 'Z'. It will stretch our imagination to the limit! Certainly, a lot to keep our brains active during the rest of lockdown as well as giving us a purpose to go outdoors with our cameras while exercising!



Top Left: Homemade Christmas Decorations

Bottom Left: Snowy Day

Above: Support Bubbly

Kate Marsham

Members' Contributions

Bird Watching Review

This was sent to the Bird Watching group but will resonate with a wider audience - Ed

A few days ago, I was at Redesmere walking quietly along when I saw a pair of Red-legged Partridge, which are fairly unusual. They were on the ground not in the seasonal pear tree, when from absolutely nowhere a sparrow hawk swooped down and tried to take one of them, a sight I had never witnessed before. Luckily the partridge escaped.

It made me think what a strange year this has been for ornithologists or birdwatchers, and how I have missed the u3a meetings. Could any of us have predicted when we started the year at Poynton watching a Kingfisher across the Pool or on our interesting walk along the Riverside Park in February what lay in store.

Sadly, when we were told in March that the outing to Brereton was cancelled, we all expected things would be back to normal by September, but I think which September was not actually mentioned.

For myself it has been one of the strangest years I can recall, being the first year I have not visited a named bird reserve and with both our proposed holidays in Wales cancelled. My bird watching has been limited to the locality of around Macclesfield/Poynton.

Overall, I have seen less species this year than normal with just 115 and recorded for the BTO around 22,000 records, which has meant that I have come to appreciate our local wildlife even more.

As a regular visitor to Poynton Pool things especially this autumn have been on the quieter side with Goosanders returning over the last few weeks, and the number of Tufted Duck increasing to around a dozen. We had a brief visit from some Shovelers but they have now moved on.

One of the many benefits of keeping records is that you can look back over previous periods and this year there have been no records of Redwings in particular, which last year were in the Park in considerable numbers. This is probably due to the fact that the weather has been relatively mild and extremely damp rather than cold and frosty. I guess there is still time for that to change.

I, like everybody else, hope things will improve in the New Year. There is some cause for optimism with a vaccination but the roll out of this will certainly take time. So as Christmas approaches and the New Year is not far away, I extend to you and to everybody connected with our group in the u3a my very best wishes.

If nothing else, enjoy the birds from the windows of your homes, keep warm, keep safe, and one day we will meet again.

Peter Kirk

How to get to Poynton – Part 2

I read Helen Stanley's piece in the last newsletter about the transport system Poynton enjoyed in the 1950s with interest as I was around at that time, though my memories are more about the buses and trains in the late 50s and early to mid-60s. I used to catch the 32 bus every school day to go to school in Manchester after my eleven plus. It became quite tedious repeating the same journey so many times. Returning home in the late afternoon (school finished at 4.00 pm) could be a problem. If the bus out of Manchester was full, it wouldn't stop to pick up any more passengers when it reached my stop. That meant waiting for the next one. Fortunately, the rush hour was just beginning so the 32s ran every 30 minutes. However, you couldn't be sure you'd be able to get on the next one either! There was a back-up 32 that followed the main bus, but it only ran as far as Southfield House at Woodford. It was worth jumping on because sometimes it would overtake the main 32 further along the route and you could bus hop on to the one going all the way to Poynton. It was hit and miss though, and sometimes you'd find yourself at Southfield House with the choice of a long walk into Poynton or waiting for a 20A coming from Woodford. If you'd just missed one that meant a 30-minute wait anyway, so walking could be just as fast – and if you didn't have the money for a second fare the 20A bus was not an option.

The bus service number 20/20A was, however, a good one. The two buses actually ran every half hour on each service (at least in the first half of the 1960s), which meant there was a bus into Manchester from Poynton church every fifteen minutes. It took only 45 minutes to get to Piccadilly Gardens, possibly because after Stockport it was a limited stop service. This compares very well with the hour and a half timetabled for the much-depleted service in later years. This made it easy to go shopping in central Manchester – something my mother and aunties did often. As a teenager, however, the 20/20A was more useful for going to watch Stockport County or hitting the nightlife of Stockport – those were the days of Merseybeat and there were lots of local groups around. You had to be sure you caught the last bus though, or else you had a long walk home.

Helen is wrong, however, about the trains which ran through Higher Poynton. They didn't run to Manchester via Hazel Grove and Davenport, but went via Marple (Rose Hill) and Romiley to Manchester Piccadilly (as it then was) - the route the Middlewood Way still follows as far as Marple. I think Helen is thinking of the line from Buxton to Manchester which runs through Middlewood Lower and on via Hazel Grove and Davenport.

Peter Bennett

Response from Helen:

My thanks to Peter Bennett for sending this article correcting my mistakes on the piece which I wrote last month on transport to and from the village in the late 1950s. My memories of the line passing through Middlewood station were vague and I am grateful to Peter for putting me right. I hope that other u3a members may come forward with even more information.

Helen J Stanley

Poynton, A Caring Community

In the mid-eighties I bought a book entitled 'Poynton, a Coal Mining Village'. It was the first of a few books, by local people, about Poynton's past. I was fascinated by the history of the village (as it was then), that I called home. We were incomers and not aware of the history of this area at all until we started to look for a house back in the early 1970's. The solicitor's searches mentioned past mining activities in Poynton but our priority was to get on the housing ladder. How thankful we are that we chose Poynton to settle in, with its close proximity to open countryside, good facilities and schools. Even though the village has now grown into a town, we still call it 'the village'. Our children have moved away and we are retired but we feel rooted in Poynton!

During this time, when my normal activities are on hold, I have kept in touch with various groups by taking part in Zoom meetings on the Internet. The u3a photography group meet once a month in this way. We still continue to follow our programme of project work, examples of which you may have seen in the newsletters. My WI also hold Zoom meetings. We even had a Christmas party and quiz on Zoom! The walking group have been able to have a few walks following the guidelines but have now had to suspend them for the foreseeable future. Last night my Morris dancing group, The Poynton Jemmers, held our first Zoom practice! I also talk to friends on FaceTime and even to family in New Zealand. It's so important to keep in contact with people we know and love.

Walking around Poynton during the Covid restrictions I have been aware that passers-by are friendlier, smile and say hello. A lot of people have responded to appeals for donations to various charities, especially to food banks. My WI collected food items before Christmas for a local charity and also books, jigsaws and DVDs for Styal Women's prison to keep the ladies occupied during times when they had to self-isolate or were ill. There's always somebody in worse circumstances than us. The husband of one of our members carved and painted a Pudsey Bear and placed it by their gate. They collected £108 for Children in Need.



Again, before Christmas he made a Frosty the Snowman and was able to donate £54 to The Children's Society. Some local businesses provided free meals for school children who would normally have free school meals. Knitters have been busy knitting hats and blankets for the homeless and those with mental health issues. These are just a few examples of the kindness shown during the pandemic.

The second of the books I bought about Poynton was 'Poynton a Thriving Community'. I think I can say that we are now also a Caring Community.

Kate Marsham

December Walks

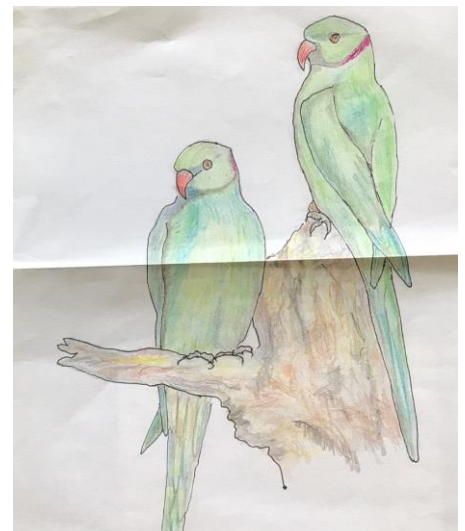
Robins are sociable birds. They welcome human presence and they sing throughout the winter. On this mild mid-December day, they keep me company as I walk up the main track in Coppice Wood. Suddenly a flock of small twittering birds flies across in front of me. The low winter afternoon sunshine catches the gold colour on their wings - goldfinches. Startled by me they have flown off a bird feeder in the garden to my left. The feeder is half full of nyjer seeds, one of goldfinches' favourite foods.

I glance over the wrought iron gate to the cottage garden and there, on the grass, is a family of reindeer, one large and two small ones. They are made of natural materials, log bodies, with smaller ones for their heads. Rudolph has a red apple nose and twiggy antlers. Opposite the gate is the entrance to the cottage, with its name clearly visible, carved on a decorative stone by the porch and doorstep 'Keepers Cottage'. On a Poynton map of 1910/11, when Coppice Wood was more extensive, there was a pheasantry here and this cottage was probably the home of the gamekeeper. Apart from a jay and a bullfinch flying across, I see very few birds.

Several days later I walk along Towers Road and scan the fields for winter birds - nothing. Instead, I change my focus to the mature trees in the front gardens on the other side of the road. Approaching South Park Drive I stop under a fir tree as I hear a high pitched 'tsee, tsee'. The sound helps me locate goldcrests in the lower branches. Only one of the three has the bright gold crest of an adult, the other two are juveniles. Intent on searching for tiny insects they ignore me.

Two summers ago, after a storm, I found, on the pavement on Dickens Lane, a perfectly formed, tiny, cup-shaped nest, made of moss, lichen and cobwebs - a goldcrest's nest. It was past the end of the breeding season, so the nest was empty. Goldcrests choose to build their nests in the forked end of a branch of a conifer, a precarious position. Strong wind had obviously dislodged this one.

I continue walking towards Poynton Pool. Through the gate on the field side, I follow the path towards the water, where I expect to see winter wildfowl. Apart from the usual tufted duck, mallard, a swan, a great crested grebe and a few geese, there is little to see. But I cannot mistake the very loud penetrating call of ring-necked parakeets. These particular ones could give me the run-around! They are somewhere in the direction of South Park Drive and I am halfway along the pool. Four years ago, we had a good view of them in the treetops here, and from chatting with people recently we know they are establishing at least one colony in this area.



Ring-necked parakeets, coloured pencil sketch by Viv

They have even been photographed on a bird feeder in Bramhall. These colourful, exotic, adaptable birds are welcome at a time when so many of our once common birds seem to be declining in numbers.

Viv Arnold

Dating A Writer

It was a couple of years back...well, all right, thirty years, then.

I was forty and feeling it. I'd had one or two drinks...too many, in the City Bar, and I wasn't celebrating.

Then this fella came and sat on the stool next to me. He eyed me up for a bit then got out his best chat-up line.

"Hey, sweetheart, haven't seen you in here before. You new around here? Where'd you come from, girl?"

So I told him:-

"This is the place where I lived; a Council Estate on the edge of a Midlands town. Houses had been hastily thrown up after the war, lines and rows of identical red-brick houses built on a deep bed of clay.

Metal-framed windows stared blankly at identical front doors that remained firmly shut, and were seldom opened unless for the entry of the rector or doctor, when they were hastily cleared of the junk that had accumulated; unopened bills, abandoned footwear, shopping baskets and winter scarves.

The youngest children were sometimes known to rush to the wrong house, as each door was identically painted in Forest Green; such children soon learned to read numbers or identify their own home by its smell.

On the outside, wire fences rusted as feeble sticks tried to grow into hedges. Uneven patchy lawns grew on the thin covering of topsoil; the seed was stolen by opportunist birds or trodden in by childhood games. Ambitious fathers created rockeries on the slopes, and their children promptly fell down them.

In summer, the road tar melted and formed exciting bubbles ripe for prodding with a finger or stick.

In winter, ice on pavements formed a solid base; snow fell and melted by day and at night froze into solid lumps and hollows where feet had trodden.

Occasionally, and a cause of much childhood excitement, an underground spring erupted, trickling water across the road; so we dammed the gutter and floated scraps of rubbish and twigs down the stream.

Poverty hid its guilty head inside the dwellings; fear lay like dust in dark corners. Fear of not being able to pay the rent, of the man losing his job, “getting the sack”, fear of the children catching polio or worse, that unspoken curse of the poor, tuberculosis.

Women sighed in sympathy at the news of another pregnancy; there were too many children; some food was still rationed. Bread, margarine and jam formed the main part of the children’s diet. Worse off were those whose fathers grew vegetables in the mud of the back garden, for they were force-fed cabbage, beetroot and beans every day while the crop lasted. Every girl was brought up to know where the best unchipped cup-and-saucer were kept in case an important visitor arrived.

The women’s ambitions were to have a joint to roast on Sundays and a matching suite of furniture upholstered in uncut moquette.

Children’s clothes were handed down, or across the road, let down, taken up, lent and borrowed. Any new item was constructed of cheap cotton remnants bought off the market. The rag-and-bone man did little trade on our streets.

Superstition was rife; the rare new pair of shoes were hustled off the table top; knives were snatched off plates in case they crossed, and all cutlery was hastily concealed in a closed drawer, in stormy weather, lest they draw down the lightning.

Upstairs curtains were closed if a death occurred nearby and remained closed until the hearse crawled by slowly. Washing on an Easter Monday was strictly forbidden, for it was widely known that doing so would wash a relative away; similarly, the birth of a new child was greeted with some rejoicing but also with apprehension, for they said, the rule was “one in, one out” and they worried about the older or less fit members of the family.

When a neighbour visited another, it was certain to be for the purpose of carrying, reciting and embroidering gossip and rumour, gathering more fuel for the bonfire of a reputation. Children were banned and sent out to play even in driving rain while such news was imparted, but of course we hung round doors or open windows, beneath tablecloths or behind sofas.

At night the cheerless light of the concrete lampposts fell on the pavements, and darkness filled up the spaces between them. People hurried from one to another, their shadows growing and shrinking. Lone men told themselves there was nothing worse to fear after experiencing the War.....”

“So that’s it,” I said, turning to stare him full in the face. “Now you know.”

But he wasn’t there. The bar stool was empty.

“Hey, “I said to the barman, “where’s that chap I was talking to?”

“Left half an hour ago.” he smirked. I held out my glass.

“Give me another. And make it a double,” I said, “it’s my birthday.”

Ruth Howard

Pictures from Our Perambulations

Poynton Pool looks a little different following the cold and snowy weather. We have snow lying on ice and 'cold-footed' gulls and geese standing on the ice.



Human Communication – Part 3 of 3 - Language

Language is a complicated series of sounds which we use to relate to one another and all human languages have commands, statements, negatives and questions so as to make that relationship. When I was at school, I was taught that there are eight parts of speech but nobody bothered to tell our ancestors this and they were probably perfectly happy at first with the simplicity of a verb (doing word) such as *caught* and a couple of words to complement it *I caught birds*. While we are using language, we might use – and often do – our hands, faces and other parts of our bodies but these movements are secondary. The most important thing is the sounds that come out of our mouths. Some languages nowadays have a very large quantity of different sounds. But it is normally accepted that just a few of these sounds are sufficient for the creation of simple communications.

Language and how various languages developed in different parts of the world have been the subject of countless books. Rather than attempt the impossible in the single page of our newsletter I thought it might be more interesting to look at some examples of speech which probably most of us have experienced in our lives but not necessarily recognised as the beginning of speech – namely the early sounds which very young children make.

The minimum range of vowel sounds in language is usually accepted as three which are pronounced *ee* (as in “be”) *ah* (as in “dart”) and *oo* (as in “you”). These are referred to as the sounds of maximum acoustic salience (= very easy to hear and very easy sounds to make). Compare these to a e i o u - very short sounds which have hardly started before they have finished.

Other significant sounds are the explosive consonants P T K D. These are also very easy sounds to make and to hear and so are the ones which are particularly loved by very small children. Most of us in the course of our lives will have attempted to feed a very small infant who is sitting in a chair. The objective is to get food into the mouth of the very small child with a spoon and hope that it stays there. Various difficulties stand in the path of this objective. The first is that the small child very often wants the spoon for itself. But it can't manipulate it to get food into its mouth. However, giving it a spoon normally makes it happy and meanwhile an adult can carry food to the child's mouth on another spoon. What happens then? It doesn't take the very small child long to realise that it can make a wonderful game out of saying P T K D. It makes a good noise which is easily heard and the food carefully placed in the mouth now comes out at a faster rate than it entered. F is also useful as an addition to this game as it spreads food more widely. This is fun for some, perhaps not such fun for others! All languages have these explosive consonants so, if it makes you feel any better, small children are practising sounds like this all over the world.

There are some sounds which are much more difficult for a very young child. It is not uncommon to hear mothers complaining that a small child learns to say Dada or Papa (its father) before saying Mama. The word for a male parent begins in many languages with an explosive consonant and hence it's easy to say. So is the first person a child addresses its

father? It may or may not be the case. The word for a female parent in many languages begins with the letter *m*. Try saying the sound *mm*. *Mm* requires a lot of control over the lips, the teeth and the air which drives the sound. It is much more difficult to say than the explosive consonants and much less audible. So it doesn't appear in the feeding game. But perhaps it does appear regularly before that – the original sound. When a baby is not content, its lips begin to move and to tremble and a less easily heard sound begins namely *m m m m...* It's a sound to which its mother's ears seem to be more attuned and is normally the precursor to crying. It seems to be a cry for help, assistance, companionship. Who normally provides that help? Who does it know best? *Mmmmm mamma* might be a good guess. That sound is heard before the explosive consonants. Almost all of us I suspect have seen a child beginning to say *mmm* which quite quickly becomes a method of seeking help and morphs into crying. I have heard in English and also in several other languages a phrase such as "Oh dear he/she's beginning to *mer*."

The three long vowel sounds can be a common part of expression on their own. In themselves they often mean more than several words. My young grand-children, excited at a fireworks display but with little knowledge of words, would use *ee* and point to get my attention as the display began. As the various lighting displays appeared in the air it was *oo* showing astonishment and appreciation. As the last lights died away it was *aa*, also my father's announcement of gratitude to my mother at the end of a good meal! Language and individual words didn't simply appear one day. Language provides all human action and all human thought with a representation in sound. It is the final bit of the architecture of human development.

Since human beings began to speak there have been tens of thousands of languages, the vast majority of which we know nothing about. They disappeared because there was no writing to carry them through generations. While hundreds of written languages will remain they will do so only as relics, retained in libraries and maintained by enthusiasts in local areas. The number of languages which can keep pace with world developments is diminishing rapidly and within the lifetime of my grandchildren a single world language will appear. That is not to say that all other languages will disappear but rather that they will exist only locally and always in the shadow of the world language which will be a development of English. That die was cast not because of the economic and political imperialism of the countries where English is spoken. It arises simply from an historical accident - because the Internet happened to be the creation of English-speaking countries and already well over 80% of its data is in English.

David Sewart

Things to Do

Sudoku No 17

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

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

Below is the solution to No 16

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

More quiz questions from Hooaha.

1. In which year did Torville and Dean win a gold medal at the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo?
2. What is the carat value of pure gold?
3. In 1994 who recorded the song "Fields of Gold"?
4. Who were the two monarchs who met at The Field of the Cloth of Gold in Balinghem in June 1520?
5. What is the first name of Goldfinger, played by Gert Frobe in the 1964 James Bond film Goldfinger?

Answers to the quiz in the previous edition

1. In Imperial China, only The Emperor was permitted to wear what colour?
Yellow
2. What are the colours of the flag of Iceland?
"Sky Blue", "Fire Red" and "Snow White" representing the colours of the country's sky, volcanos and snow
3. Which heavy metal British rock band was formed in Hereford in 1968?
Deep Purple
4. Which country in the world has the highest number of citizens with red hair?
Ireland has the highest number of people per capita with red hair – 10%
5. What are the three secondary colours?
Orange, green and violet