



Poynton u3a News

poyntonu3a.org.uk

Issue 34-4

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Editorial

Welcome to the nineteenth edition of these electronic newsletters.

Last year on Monday 16th March the Prime Minister announced the first lockdown and the Annual General Meeting scheduled for the next day was cancelled. Soon after that the concept of a different-style electronic newsletter was mooted and the first electronic edition was sent out on Wednesday 25th March. All of which makes this the first anniversary edition.

Talking of birthdays, it was the 10th anniversary of the birth of Poynton u3a in January. It went by uncelebrated as so many things have recently. Anyway, a belated Happy Birthday everybody.

As always, it is members' contributions which keep the newsletter going. Send your contribution to news@poyntonu3a.org.uk.

Poynton u3a Update

Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) and Annual General Meeting (AGM)

You should have received recently a notice of an EGM, the purpose of which is to expand our Constitution to embrace a range of ways which we might employ for holding an AGM (or EGM) in future. If you haven't got this please contact our Secretary, Jayne at enquiries@poyntonu3a.org.uk. Our present Constitution limits our AGM to a time and a place, a requirement which could not be met last year. The proposal for a revised Constitution is derived from the discussions held between The Third Age Trust and the Charity Commission.

Recent statements from Government and the highly successful vaccination programme have raised the possibility of a return to something like normal business in the not too-distant future and we are watching this carefully. A small group of Committee members has been able to maintain a care and maintenance operation but more Committee members are needed as we begin to restore our normal programme of General Meetings.

So, we hope that you might consider volunteering to help with some aspect of creating our future. If you think that you might be able to help, please contact Jayne (as above) for a preliminary chat. You might be willing to sit in on one of our Committee meetings which are held through Zoom at the moment but we hope will return to our normal face-to-face practice when this seems to be acceptable.

David Sewart

Photographic Group

Our February project involved taking close up photographs of flowers. A few examples of the contributions sent in by members are shown here.

We look forward to when we can meet up again as a group both in our monthly meetings and field trips which we all miss. In the meantime, we have monthly, quarterly and an annual project to work on! No excuse to sit at home. Even on a short walk our cameras are ready and waiting to be used!

For this coming month we shall prepare our first quarter's project which is entitled 'dominant colour'. These photographs will be shown and discussed at the April Zoom meeting. Also, at that meeting we will be showing portrait photographs which were the subject of our 'technical' challenge for March. Lyn gave us a comprehensive set of guidelines for taking portraits of adults, children and animals. All we need to do now is to find a willing subject!



Carribean Cluster



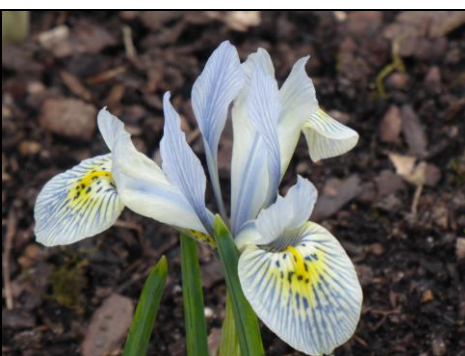
Crocus Buds



Iris cluster



Daffodil Collage



Single Iris



Amaryllis

Members' Contributions

Des...Res...

As winter turns to spring birds start looking for nest sites and I try to discover but not disturb them on my local walks. Blue tits are a giveaway as many of them use nest boxes, not only in our gardens but generally around Poynton. Four years ago, we were at Brookside Garden Centre in May, looking at plants. In the middle of this outdoor area was an attractive free standing bird house. On it was a sign 'SOLD PLEASE DO NOT DISTURB'. We could hear faint cheeping inside. A blue tit arrived, food in its beak and popped through the entrance hole, then out again. So that explained it - sold to blue tits! We spoke to one of the staff who told us the bird house had been sold twice over! The customer who had bought it had agreed to come and collect it after the young birds had fledged - what an amicable arrangement!

Last autumn I came across another Desirable Residence (Des...Res...), this one on Narrow Lane at Wardsend. Sited on an ivy-covered tree trunk was an eye-catching bird box painted in NHS rainbow colours. Would the bright colours deter possible occupants? Apparently not. A few weeks ago, on a mild February morning I saw a blue tit inspecting the box. Would it return with a mate? Would other birds investigate it, possibly a pair of great tits?



Many blue tits are satisfied with more modest accommodation. When visiting country estates, gardens and parks we have probably all seen a blue tit disappearing into the crevice of a wall or a crack in the brickwork of a building, to its well-hidden nest. They find all sorts of places to rear a family. At the Boars Head pub in Higher Poynton there is an outbuilding with a corrugated iron roof. While waiting for a bus last spring we watched a blue tit disappear under the roof, going to feed the young in its nest.

A visit to Adlington Hall about twenty years ago sticks in my memory. We were there to see the bluebells. Walking through the wood we saw a long-tailed tit fly into a small holly bush close to the path. Usually, their nests are concealed in the middle of brambles, gorse or holly. This one was clearly visible, an oval dome shape, roughly the size of a tennis ball, made from moss and cobwebs, covered with lichen and lined with hundreds of tiny feathers, so delicate and perfect, with an entrance hole in the side - a Des...Res...

Years later, when I had a pet budgie, I saved its feathers whenever it moulted. In April I scattered them in the breeze, close to where there were long-tailed tits nesting on the Middlewood Way and Dickens Lane. I would imagine a cosy nest lined with Pierre's soft blue feathers. But some I saved to scatter on our garden lawn. It was amusing to watch

excited sparrows collecting six or seven feathers in their beaks at one time, dropping them, hopping about to get as many as possible.

By contrast the nests at Poynton Pool are constructed in a more haphazard way. Coots (with white foreheads) and moorhen (with red foreheads) collect plant leaves, stems, dead reeds and other vegetation. They make an untidy heap, either in the reeds or near the waters-edge where branches extend out in the water.

Following their stunning courtship display facing each other and head raising, great crested grebes make a floating island nest out of plant material. Years ago, when Richard went fishing at the pool, he regularly saw seven or eight nests. In recent years we have seen only one. Is this decline due to lack of small fish for food or the dominance of numerous coots and moorhens? Mallards nest away from the water.

Watching birds make a nest can be unexpectedly entertaining. Years ago, when Richard stood waiting for a commuter train at Poynton station he would listen to the birdsong and look around. One week a jay was facing a challenge. Normally a jay makes a nest in a forked branch in a tree. This one had a more creative idea using part of the structure of the Johnnie Johnson building. Where the angled pipe from the eaves gutter connected into the rainwater down pipe a fork was formed and a jay tried in vain to make a nest there. Time and again it returned with big twigs but its efforts to balance them in the fork failed as they kept falling to the ground. After several days it gave up.

The other commuters were unaware of the birds around this leafy station. Richard also watched a chaffinch making a nest, just a metre away, in a bush the other side of the wire fencing, a neat cup shaped nest. And a mistle thrush made its nest every spring in dense ivy on a tree.

So, wherever you find yourself, enjoy the birds.

Richard and Viv Arnold

Old Memories versus the Future

Will we all be living in the past for the foreseeable future? Memories keep springing up of our younger selves, together with our younger friends, relatives and loves. Why? We could look to the future or is that too much to bear? Sometimes past events and happenings are a comfort, and at other times just plain depressing. Lost opportunities, wrong decisions and just generally dispiriting thoughts wing their way through our minds, or at least they do through mine. None of us can change the past, however much we go through it in our minds.

On the other hand, spring is here, sunny days are getting longer, lovely snowdrops, crocus and daffodils bloom, the primroses are appearing in the hedgerows. We can look forward to happy times watching our grandchildren racing round the garden again being horses, with lots of whinnying, snorting and pawing the ground before they begin their hunt for the

Gruffalo in the wood. One of these fine days we will be able to share time and space with all the people who we have not seen for a long time and hugs will return to our lives.

Still breathing, and feeling grateful for that, I really do not need to hear another weary or lurid tale of operations or blow by blow accounts in detail of physical failings and symptoms. I hope that I am not being callous or unsympathetic but one bit of positive news or anecdote really makes a pleasant change and will make my day. The odd bout of uncontrolled laughter, producing face-ache at some unexpected and often idiotic remark seems to rejuvenate me in a most incredible way, thank goodness.

Helen J Stanley

Garden Surprise

At the beginning of the last week of February Helen said there was a surprise near the bottom of the garden and I would never guess what it could be. So, leading me down between the two already winter pruned apple trees to the Bramley apple, as yet unpruned, there was not a fairy to be seen. However there on a rather gnarled and decrepit stump of a branch I could see that the tree was playing host to three small twigs, each with two leaves of mistletoe. Next morning, I had to go down to check, just to make sure that I had not had some gardening dream, no it was still there, not that I am yet planning on standing any Christmas market in the near future.



Many years ago, I rubbed some mistletoe berries on to that same tree, whether or not it was that bough I cannot say. I have no idea of the germination period of mistletoe seeds, but it is probably something less than forty years. It is strange the things that grow, and where they grow; we had day lilies which flowered but for years now they still grow but don't flower. Wild orchid bloomed for a number of years then disappeared. Evening primrose plants appear in various odd places, far away from where they flowered last year.

The gardening growth is still a joy even though at this time of the year last year's detritus is a chore still to be faced, as is preparing ground for this season's planting. Runner bean seeds are saved, potatoes too early yet for sprouting, but all this fades into insignificance compared with the magical mistletoe.

Clive B Hill

Are You Being Served? – Mark 2

In the last newsletter, Ruth Howard related her memory of visits to a store with her grandma. Well, I have such memories too, albeit in a different context.

In my early thirties I was looking for another job. I had been working briefly as assistant to the sales manager of a national mail order company but found that I missed the customer contact previously experienced in high street retailing. Completely 'on spec' I sent my c.v. to the MD of one of Leeds' department stores, Matthias Robinson.

Back came a letter inviting me to an interview. Nigel Robinson the MD had just taken over from his father on the sale of the store to Debenhams. Apparently, he had been instructed to appoint an initial 'floor controller'. He admitted that he hadn't a definitive idea of the job involved but said that local buying would end in favour of a central purchasing regime. I was offered the job.

I reported to the MD's office at 10am on my first day and was handed over to Nigel's cousin, George who was the Merchandise Manager. He took me round the store to introduce me to the senior staff. As we walked round the departments, I kept seeing the MD's secretary carrying a number of small notes. These, I subsequently learned contained the first knowledge of my arrival... As my duties were to change their jobs and status in the near future, you can imagine the descent of a few 'lead balloons'!

I was to be the floor controller of the large ground floor consisting of ten departments, each run by a buyer/manager. The buyer function would be eliminated as each department was turned over to central purchasing at head office in London. Now, mostly female, these buyers had joined the firm from school, had eventually been promoted to their present positions and, naturally were totally opposed to the forthcoming arrangements. My surprise arrival did nothing to improve their demeanour.

After my initial introduction, I was left to get on with it - no office, no desk was provided; instead, I installed myself on the end of the knitting wool section with a cubby-hole unit with a chair. Yes, I was 'in charge' of ten departments, each dominated by a long-standing senior - not surprisingly, it took me some time to win over these people - in fact the ladies' glove buyer, Ms. Wood, the Dowager of the group, hated me from day one up to the day when she thankfully retired.

The senior staff used to take their lunches and coffee breaks at a reserved table in a corner of the public restaurant on the top floor. The Dowager used to occupy the same chair with a clear view of the entire room. Nobody ever sat in that chair, even when she was on her day off - I think that says it all!

Now, *Are You Being Served* was modelled on Simpson's of Piccadilly but could easily have been a replica of Matthias Robinson. We had a laughingly-titled General Manager, Mr Harness who knew nothing about the business but was useful if you needed extra counters

or glass fixtures. We had Mrs Mutch, a smartly-dressed, diminutive figure, who was the Personnel Manager, with little to do as very few people left or joined and there wasn't any staff welfare to speak of. They often both appeared on the sales floors for no apparent purpose. Occasionally, Nigel's father, the previous MD, walked around with his deaf aid but you were warned by the wise to be careful what you said within a distance of twenty-five yards as he could hear every word. 'You are all doing very well'.

There was a perceived hierarchy for senior staff. The fashion buyers on the first floor were at the top, especially the fur buyer - (we lost a mink coat from a display window once). The dress buyer and ladies' shoe buyer vied for second place! My lot were further down the list, apart from my 'friend' the Dowager and possibly the perfumery lady who had moved from Finnigan's of Wilmslow.

One of my departments was the lace and trimmings section - a mammoth island area, shaped like a channel ferry and not far from the size of one! The lady in charge of this profit burner simply couldn't resist ordering more and more stock of now outdated accessories. Drawers and cabinets were stuffed to the brim and 'cousin George' simply failed to control her budget. Finally, she was persuaded to retire (she must have been nearly seventy) and on her final day we saw her off with a glass of Sherry. Within an hour of her departure, we had dismantled her empire, putting all the stock into sale bins and by the following morning, it was as if her pride and joy had never existed. Rather sad but necessary.

There was an openly gay man, a splendid chap who ran the toy section and who stage-managed the store end-of-year pantomime and whose partner turned up at the staff door each Friday evening with a bunch of flowers. Well, this was the late sixties! Our sales person supreme was Mr Davies, in charge of men's and boys' wear. He was like lightning with a tape measure and could fit you up with a new suit before you took breath.

Anyway, my job was to liaise with Debenhams head office as each department became centrally bought starting, from memory, with ladies' hosiery. That was the worst bit but acceptance got better as we progressed installing the new systems.

In these days of self-service, auto-tills and minimal staffing, it's difficult to imagine how retailing existed profitably in those far-off days.

Ian Beverley

Pictures from Our Perambulations

Following the discussion of the Middlewood stations in the December and January issues, here is a combination of some local pictures with some local history.

The two Middlewood stations, Higher and Lower, are located where two railway lines cross. The first line to be built was opened in 1857 between Stockport Edgeley and Whaley Bridge. It was owned by the Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge Railway (SD&WB) and was built by the London and North Western Railway (LNWR) to connect with the Cromford and High Peak Railway (C&HP) at Whaley Bridge. The LNWR formally acquired the line in 1866.

[The C&HP was completed in 1831, the year the Macclesfield Canal was opened.]

The second line belonged to the Macclesfield, Bollington and Marple Railway (MB&M) and ran between Macclesfield and Marple. The route was opened jointly by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway (MS&L) and the North Staffordshire Railway (NSR) in 1869. It was part of an alternative link between Manchester and destinations south of Macclesfield. This line goes over the SD&WB.

The stations owed their existence to the desire to create an interchange between the MB&MR and the route between Stockport and Buxton. Without the interchange, people wishing to travel between Macclesfield and Buxton had to travel to Stockport to change trains and then travel back on themselves to get to Buxton. The board of the MB&M proposed to the LNWR that both companies should open a station where the two lines crossed at Middlewood, to allow passengers to save a considerable distance and time in their travel; the LNWR agreed and both the MB&M station, known simply as Middlewood, and the LNWR's Middlewood for Norbury station opened on 1st April 1879. They were connected by a flight of steps.

While this allowed for passenger interchange, the layout did not allow for goods interchange and, in 1882, discussions started on connecting the two lines by a rail link. The NSR and the LNWR agreed terms, but the MS&L could not agree running powers with the LNWR, so the NSR and LNWR agreed to proceed on their own. The resulting section of line known as the Middlewood curve opened on 20th May 1885.

Middlewood Higher station was a timber construction. The steep sides of the embankment and the construction of the platform made the station prone to subsidence. In 1955, the waiting room and part of the platform collapsed and was never re-built due to the low numbers of people using the station. With a smaller platform there was only enough room for three carriages.

On the 7th November 1960, Middlewood Higher station was closed but trains continued to run. Ten years later the whole line was closed on 5th January 1970. Middlewood Lower then became just Middlewood.



Below are some present-day pictures with a couple of older Black & White ones from the information board. More pictures are available on the Disused Stations website – www.disused-stations.org.uk/m/middlewood_higher/index.shtml



Looking down on Middlewood station from the bridge over the line on the Middlewood Way. The steps are on the right.



Standing on the platform for Stockport looking towards the bridge carrying the Middlewood Way.



Middlewood Higher station looking towards Marple. The bridge is visible at the far end of the platform



Just south of Middlewood Higher. The start of the Middlewood Curve is visible on the right.



The site of Middlewood Higher station. As above, the bridge is just visible in the background on the right.



The start of the Middlewood Curve. The path now leads into Jacksons' Brickworks Nature Reserve.

Spring Flowers

Daffodils appear with cheery yellow
bonnets,
As they rise from a bulb in early spring.
Standing tall on slender willowy stalks,
Still there, after a battering from the wind.

Snowdrops are very brave,
Keeping low in dappled shade.
With droplets of chalky white petals,
Propagating in a woodland glade.

Bluebells in late spring, attract bees beneath
the trees.
Covering the ground in a lavender blue haze.
Adorned with clusters of tiny bells,
That ring unheard in a gentle breeze.

Crocus dressed in purple, yellow and white
Gives a saffron spice from their stigma
centre.

Grown in local gardens and alpine tundra.
Multiply from bulbs, the squirrel a
tormenter.

Muscari bulbs bloom in spring,
Grape-like flowers, in bright blue.
Standing to attention on slender stalks,
A pretty display in my field of view.

These flowers represent the beginning of
Spring
And when they appear make you smile.
So, enjoy them as much as you can,
As they're only here for a short while.

Susan J Pyett

Things to Do

Sudoku No 19

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

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

Below is the solution to No 18

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

More quiz questions from Hooha.

1. Who played the fourth Doctor Who?
2. In which year was Sputnik launched?
3. Who wrote the song about a Trip to the Moon on Gossamer Wings?
4. When did Florida's Cape Kennedy revert to its 400-year-old name of Cape Canaveral?
5. How old was Yuri Gagarin when he was the first man to be sent into space?

Answers to the quiz in the previous edition

1. How is Stephani Joanne Angelina Germanotta better known?
Lady Gaga
2. In which year did the last flying Vulcan Bomber XH558 celebrate its 30th birthday at Woodford Air Show?
1990
3. Name the birthplace of Elvis Presley.
Tupelo, Mississippi
4. How many times did the 6th wife of Henry VIII, Catherine Parr, marry?
4 – Sir Edward Burgh, John Neville, King Henry VIII and Thomas Seymour
5. In which year did the wearing of seat belts become compulsory in this country?
1983 on January 31st

Solution to Crossword No.29

A	S	P	I	R	E		A	B	D	U	C	T	O	R
L		A		O				R		R		A		A
L	E	S	S	O	N		G	E	T	G	O	I	N	G
E		T		T		I		A		E		L		I
R	A	R	E		A	N	O	D	E		B	O	N	N
G		A		G		C		W		T		R		G
I	M	M	O	R	T	A	L	I	S	E	D			
C		I		E		N		N		N		L		R
			M	A	I	D	E	N	V	O	Y	A	G	E
C		C		T		E		E		R		U		A
U	G	L	I		U	S	U	R	E		S	N	I	P
R		O		A		C		S		I		D		P
D	I	S	A	S	T	E	R		A	D	H	E	R	E
L		E		I		N				L		R		A
E	N	T	R	A	N	T	S		C	E	N	S	O	R

Reminder: Crossword No 29 was submitted by **Nigel Burin**. If you enjoyed doing the crossword and are interested in being part of a u3a group to set crosswords, please email Nigel via groups@poyntonu3a.org.uk.

And finally.....



A selection of Thank You cards received in the process of membership renewal.

The Committee wants to thank everybody who has renewed. Expectations have been exceeded!

We couldn't have done it without you!

Who would have believed that a year ago we were discussing if and how to keep the Newsletter going; well, we did. On the first anniversary of our online newsletter, I would like to thank all the contributors, including information from the committee, pieces from Creative Writers, articles from Photography and other writings from members, even some from the Newsletter Group. The biggest thanks of all must go to Derek Gatenby for his resolve and persistence in producing nineteen Newsletters.

Clive B Hill