



# Poynton u3a News

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**[poyntonu3a.org.uk](http://poyntonu3a.org.uk)**

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## **Editorial**

Welcome to the twenty-second edition of these electronic newsletters. Contributions are as always welcome. Send them to [news@poyntonu3a.org.uk](mailto:news@poyntonu3a.org.uk).

## **Poynton u3a Update**

### **Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

Our 2021 AGM has provided for members the basic information about the present operation of our u3a. Perhaps the most important piece of information is the demonstration that Poynton u3a is still here! We have managed to keep in touch with our members through the regularity of the expanded Newsletter. Membership is still over 400 and several of our Interest Groups have been able to continue operations.

While there seems to be greater hope at last of getting back to our regular General Meetings, we cannot yet put any dates to that and will need to comply with the requirements which the Town Council determines for the usage of the Civic Hall. "Hasten slowly" remains our motto at the moment. However, we can welcome two new members to our committee - Anna Marsden and Marilyn Westbrook.

**David Sewart**

### **Geology Group – Visit to Grin Low**

Although the geology group have been meeting regularly on zoom during the past year, we had all been looking forward to our first field trip in over 18 months. Well, the day arrived two weeks ago when Peter had organised a trip for us to meet at Grin Low Country Park near Buxton. We were armed with the paper handouts that Peter had prepared earlier via email (and some of us had read them in advance of the trip!), packed lunches, clothes for the weather conditions, hand sanitisers and masks (just in case). After a circuitous journey due to the Cat and Fiddle Road being unexpectedly closed, we eventually met at the car park, albeit a bit late. There were 13 of us altogether, and it is difficult to describe how great it was to see everyone in person, rather than on a screen.

Grin Low is a large disused limestone quarry, one of many in the Buxton area. There are some that are still active. Although quarrying here dates back to at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the extraction of the limestone expanded hugely with the Industrial Revolution. The

limestone was burnt in lime kilns using locally sourced coal for fuel, to make lime for agriculture and lime mortar for buildings. I should point out here that the limestones around Buxton, including Grin Low, were deposited around 350 million years ago, when the area was a warm shallow sea located near the equator.

Peter guided us round the site, pointing out rock formations and remnants of the lime kilns as we went. The walk was a fairly gentle one, with fantastic views over Buxton and the Peak District by the time we had reached the highest point of the site at Solomon's Temple. This was built as a folly, and had a spiral staircase to the top, which only a few of us climbed.



*Receiving Instructions*



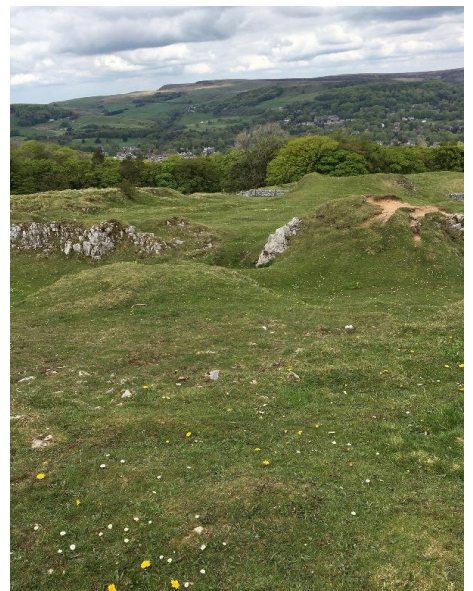
*The Group from the top of Solomon's Temple*



*Studying a Rock Formation*



*Solomon's Temple*



*Lime Kiln Remains*

The weather was kind to us that day and when we got back to our cars some of us sat on benches outside, having a socially distanced lunch and catch-up on our news from the past year! All in all, it was a lovely day and we can't wait for the next outing. Many thanks to Peter (and Hilary) for all their hard work in making it such an enjoyable and informative day.

**Sandra Batchelor**



## Photography Group

Following monthly meetings via Zoom throughout the lockdown, in May we welcomed the opportunity for our first outing in which we intended to capture by photograph some interesting street scenes in Stockport. Unfortunately, it was rather a wet day but, despite the weather, a few courageous stalwarts made the effort and successfully captured some interesting scenes without needing to compete with hordes of pedestrians. Last Friday's meeting (June 4<sup>th</sup>) provided an excellent opportunity for us all to share these images together with a selection gathered in other towns around Britain and indeed from around the world.

Supplementing his first presentation last month, Peter gave a short but very interesting and informative presentation in which he sought to help us make future photographs more interesting and better balanced. I will certainly take a critical look at some of my photos and see how I can improve them. Lyn followed with some interesting tips on how we might make best use of reflections when we are using our cameras/phones.

The outing for June will be to Tegg's Nose where we will use our photographs to try and capture the atmosphere of the place, ready for the next meeting.

The quarterly project is to construct triptychs (several images in a single view) so I am sure that there will be a variety of imaginative creations for us all to share next month.

Below is a selection of the street scenes captured by members of the group.

### Keith Batchelor





## Members' Contributions

### Goslings, Ducks and Mandarin Ducks

There is always a sense of anticipation when setting off on a walk for birdwatching, and we chatted about what we might expect to see on an early May morning at Poynton Pool. Would we see the pied wagtail which nested in the boathouse last year? Had the sand martins already passed through on their return to nest sites?

Entering the park through the top gate on South Park Drive we were greeted by the penetrating song of a song thrush, singing from a tree in the coppice. The phrases it repeated sounded like "no, no, no, is it, is it, is it, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, go away, go away, go away." We approached the water's edge quietly and sat on the nearest seat. Four greylag geese with three goslings, probably a family group, were nibbling the short grass. Although used to the presence of people the adult geese stretched their necks every so often to look around and check there were no threats to their young.

A grey wagtail which was flying around, calling, landed on the next seat. Directly in front of us a pair of great crested grebes were diving in unison. We were hoping this would lead to their courtship dance, which involves head shaking and a 'weed dance', when they rise out of the water, facing each other with weed in their beaks. Unfortunately, not today, we were unlucky. They separated and busied themselves preening their feathers.

As we passed the boathouse, I heard a twittering I recognised - hirundines. "Look up" said Richard. There in the blue sky was a flock of approximately fifty birds, mostly house martins with a few swallows and swifts. They were feeding on a cloud of insects. After a few minutes they all flew away. Ten minutes earlier or later and we would have missed them.

The field side of the pool was bustling with activity, a female mallard with three small ducklings, a pair of greylag geese with two goslings, a coot and a moorhen, each with two chicks. Parents were vigilant, 'shepherding' young as they explored their watery environment. Reaching the South Park Drive end of the pool, I managed to pick out, from



the background noise, the song of a reed bunting. Sure enough, there was a male (about the size and colouration of a house sparrow but with a very black head) sat at the top of a willowy bush. The female was probably sitting on eggs on a nest close to the ground and well hidden in the reeds.

As we opened the gate to leave the park at 11am, a greater spotted woodpecker, calling loudly, flew out of a tree next to us. We were pleased with our morning's sightings but there was a final surprise in store. Amongst the yellow flag irises at the end of the pool, was a disused swans' nest, a substantial pile of old reeds and vegetation. It had been requisitioned by a mallard family, several ducklings sunning themselves, others tucked under mother's wing.

Three days later, we were in Buxton, in Pavilion Gardens. Why were we not surprised to see resting on an island in the lake, a group of the most colourful duck to be seen on U.K. waters - eight male mandarins. For these exotic ducks have increased dramatically in numbers since they were introduced as ornamental wildfowl in the eighteenth century and may be found on rivers, lakes and canals.



*Watercolour of mandarin duck by Viv*

Luck, timing and surprise are just some of the elements which make birdwatching an endlessly absorbing and exciting hobby.

## **Viv and Richard Arnold**

### **Pictures from Our Perambulations**

We passed the same way as the Arnolds and here are a couple of photographs of the disused swans' nest. It has had a change of use. It is now a feeding station for a pair of moorhens and their young.



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## People from the Past.

Having a keen interest in family history, I have researched my family tree a lot over time. A great deal can be done on line and this has given me plenty of information about my ancestors.

But sometimes, there is nothing better than visiting the actual place where they were born. Towns and villages that are found on baptism, marriage and death certificates and the census, can give you an idea of where they lived. Visiting the area can give you a sense of place, a feeling of how they lived and worked.

So we arranged a long weekend in the Coalbrookdale area of Shropshire. It is famous for the 'Ironbridge', which is the oldest iron bridge in the world. It spans the River Severn near Telford, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. And is the place where my paternal great great grandfather Thomas Pritchard was born. I had collected a lot of information about the family and was about to find out more about the Pritchard side. After travelling to 'Ironbridge' we had lunch in the village overlooking the river. Later we walked over to the other side of the bridge taking in the views along the longest river in England. The bridge was built in 1779 and was about to undergo some much-needed restoration work. It was first built for people on foot or horse drawn carriages and carts. It enabled them to get from one side of the river to the other as more factories opened up along each side of the river. One of the factories was in Coalport where the famous china was made, now a museum. Coalbrookdale is where the furnaces for making cast iron were built in 1757 and produced the cast iron from which the bridge was made. If you look at some of the pictures at the time, it is easy to see why the newspapers of the day named them the 'Bedlum Furnaces'. They used to light up the whole of the valley at night with a bright orange glow. We spent some time in the Gorge Museum, collecting historical information about the area, its industrial past and of course the facts about the builder of the bridge, a man called Abraham Darby III. Interestingly the designer of the bridge, who is not usually mentioned, was a man called Thomas Farnolls Pritchard. This was an exciting find, could he be related to my Thomas Pritchard? More research to do!

Later that afternoon we made our way to our accommodation for the night which was in Madeley, a village not far away.

The Madeley Court Hotel is a sixteenth-century manor house steeped in history, in countryside surroundings with a lakeside view, it is a perfect place to relax after a hectic day. It was rebuilt in Tudor times from locally quarried stone with mullioned windows to all three floors. We were shown to a room on the first floor. As we walked down long narrow corridors with creaky floorboards, it was as though we were walking back in time. The room was large, with three leaded windows which overlooked the grounds at the back of the building. The furniture was in keeping with the historic feel of the Manor, including a four-poster bed. It was first built as a Priory Grange and the monks were the first people to live there in 1344. After the evening meal we went off to bed. It was a balmy May evening

so we opened the windows. We could hear a gentle breeze blowing through the trees, birdsong and then silence, very peaceful. But I had a troubled night's sleep. In the room, earlier that day, I had found a small cupboard with a tiny window. It was just big enough to store the case and coats. It reminded me of a priest hole, which were built in some Tudor homes at the time of the Reformation. It must have been on my mind when I went to sleep. When I awoke, I could see in the dim light, the door of the small cupboard was wide open. I got up to close it. Eventually I awoke again to a tapping noise coming from the righthand side wall of the room near a window. It was about 4am, at first it was a gentle tap but later it became incessant, more urgent. Thinking it was the central heating system I tried to get back to sleep. I was awoken again with more tapping, this time it was intense and loud. I got up and looked out of the open window, to see if anyone was working in the courtyard below. There was no one there, not a soul, just an empty courtyard. In the end I made a drink and eventually we both got up for breakfast, ready for the day ahead.

When our stay came to an end, we went to the reception to pay the bill. In conversation with the staff, they asked us about our stay. I mentioned the tapping noises. 'That's one of the ghosts' she said. 'How many have you got?' I asked. 'Well, the situation you have described sounds like it is probably the monk. Sightings of him are seen moving slowly across the grounds in the morning mist. Hood up and head down, hands concealed in his long sleeves, ignoring any attempt to communicate. Other times, he has been known to tap on the walls and windows very early in the morning, we think for morning prayer and contemplation. When you go to the window, he knows he has got you up! The tapping usually stops and he slips away'. I must admit everything she described apart from an actual sighting happened. There are other ghosts on the top floor of the Manor. Maids dressed in Victorian clothes, going about their business cleaning the floors. If you try to communicate with them, they simply fade away and mysteriously disappear. The staff work in twos and have often seen them. But the worst ghost apparently, is in the Gatehouse tower which is used for functions and weddings. He or she is a poltergeist and sometimes gets very angry with the noise and music. It is known to be responsible for throwing furniture about. I had no idea the hotel was haunted but given how old the building was and its long history, I was not surprised. Also, Abraham Darby I, grandfather to the famous builder of the bridge and ironmaking pioneer, died at Madeley Court aged only 39.

**Susan J Pyett**

## The Wheelbarrow

Handsome you were in primer red,  
Shapely and strong and craftsman-bred.  
A model of weathered, seasoned wood  
With a wheel that turned as a true wheel  
should.

When you were new and clean inside  
You offered a safe but bumpy ride.

Then you were put to work and toil  
With compost loads and mounds of soil  
And plants for setting in the Spring-  
You bore the weight of everything.  
The grass heaps from the Summer mow,  
The grounded leaves from Autumn blow.  
The broken limbs of trees and briers,  
Thick pine logs for the Winter fires.

Retirement came one April day...  
Constructed in the modern way,  
A barrow built of metal parts  
Was bought but failed to win our hearts.  
It clattered over steps and path  
And rattled like a tin-type bath-  
And seemed to creak and jar and grumble  
Unlike YOUR inoffensive rumble.

Now it's marred with sorrel rust  
And shaky legs no-one can trust,  
But you, my friend, the old has-been,  
Are featured in the garden scene.  
Bright with paint and filled with bloom,  
You stand with style in sun or gloom  
And proud to be, without excuse -  
More an ornament than use!

**Ian Beverley**

## Things to Do

Sudoku No 22

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

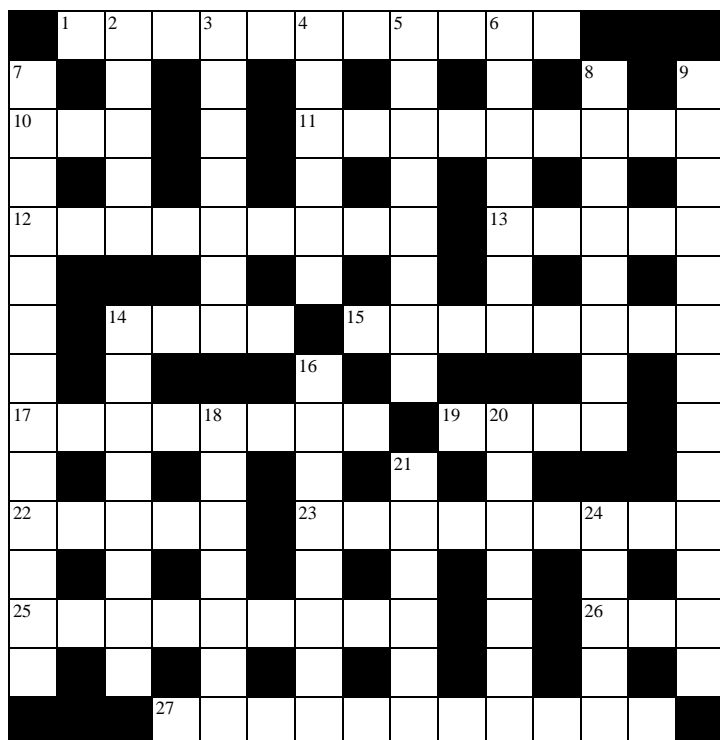
Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9

Below is the solution to No 21

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



## Crossword No.32



Submitted by **Nigel Burin** and **Eileen Shore**. If you are interested in being part of a u3a group to compile crosswords, please contact Nigel via [groups@poyntonu3.org.uk](mailto:groups@poyntonu3.org.uk).

## Solution to Crossword No 31

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

## ACROSS

1. Manipulated Cockney bloke did the housework, apparently (11)
10. Rower roars endlessly (3)
11. Strange going back about making a mistake. leading to heroism (7,2)
12. Not a minor change he proposes (9)
13. River work with no effort (5)
14. King, that is the fifth capital (4)
15. Mother's unhappy about the newspaper title (8)
17. Two allow charm (8)
19. Composer has herb with no companion (4)
22. Turn up bashful yet unpleasantly self-assertive (5)
23. Cross In court, brief inside (9)
25. Church official has wrapped Indian silks, brown, round about (9)
26. In addition to love (3)
- 27 & 3 Down. I can eat fruit belonging to illegal receiver for reprehensible crime by public official (11, 7)

## DOWN

2. To the point, as Caesar might have said (2, 3)
3. See 27 Across
4. Awfully adept after university revision (6)
5. Rare nut I turned over for old Tuscan resident, or one maybe from Stoke (8)
6. English Literature is initially terribly highbrow (7)
7. Local relief on the way after repotting pot pansy by son (7, 6)
8. Des and Agnes getting confused. It's a condition we're all aware of (8)
9. Thoughtfulness of criminal helping around team (13)
14. King has forty winks by fire for kit bag (8)
16. Stay small and run down (8)
18. See one in total bliss (7)
20. Flower in part of speech given by girl (7)
21. In Macbeth, Nicola is from another culture (6)
24. Speak highly of former tax cut (5)

More quiz questions from Hooha.

1. When was Poynton's Brookfield Cinema built?
2. Which famous racehorse drew the largest crowds ever to attend Poynton Show when making a guest appearance at the Show in 1978?
3. Where is The Black Prince buried?
4. Of which wood were English longbows made?
5. What was the source of the name of the indie pop band Blossoms, formed in 2013?

Answers to the quiz in the previous edition

1. Name the smallest breed of horse in the world.  
*Falabella an Argentinian small horse*
2. At 80, Tom Jones has recently become the oldest male singer to do what?  
*Reach No 1 in the charts with his latest album called "Surrounded by Time"*
3. How long is the Macclesfield Canal?  
*The Macclesfield Canal is 26 miles long.*
4. How many sons did Eleanor of Aquitaine and Henry II have?  
*Five – William, Henry, Geoffrey, Richard and John*
5. Whose latest book is called "Wake Up"?  
*Piers Morgan*