

SPOTLIGHT on Skiddaw

Feb 2023

www.skiddawu3a.co.uk

Dear Members,

Welcome to the first **Spotlight** of 2023 and Happy New Year to you all! This is not an empty greeting because we do, in fact, have a great deal to be happy about in Skiddaw u3a: we've weathered the storms of the pandemic and can now look forward to a year crammed with enjoyable activities. Many thanks to all of you who have kept our interest groups going and who are facing the challenges of doing so in the modern world with energy and optimism.

You can find information inside from Sue Grant about a trip on June 14th that promises to be very, very attractive to many of us: a visit to the RHS Gardens at Bridgwater in north Manchester. In the words of Gomez, "Don't delay. See the world!"

Then there are three terrific Monthly Meetings coming our way. In February, Ted McArdle will take the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as his subject, in March our guest speaker Ian Finlay will take us on a cycle tour of the world and, to complete a notable and varied programme, Fran Sandham will take us to Africa in April to find out what really happened when Stanley uttered those immortal words: "Dr Livingstone I presume".

April. April is, of course, the cruellest month. That's why we have the AGM then. Please, please don't 'switch off' at this point. Tony Marsh has made an impassioned plea inside this magazine for help with the running of our organisation. We need people who care about the development of Skiddaw u3a to come forward bringing with them their common sense, their experience of life and their desire to help in the service of all members. Could it be you?

A very happy 2023, everyone.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

All meetings are in Crosthwaite Parish Room and begin at 10.30 am with doors open from 10 am. Entry will be charged at £1 for members and £1.50 for visitors. Although there are no government restrictions in place, do be aware that Covid has not gone away, so please observe social distancing as much as possible and feel free to wear a mask.

Wednesday, February 15th

“More than just a Brotherhood”

Ted McArdle is a Skiddaw u3a member and was a longstanding Executive Committee member. He is the man we all rely on for technical support and he is a key member of the team producing our annual guide.

Ted will explore the relationships within the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their models and muses through a selection of their paintings. Ted has given us some superb presentations in the past, and this one sounds equally fascinating. Not to be missed!



Wednesday 15th March
“My Endless Summer”

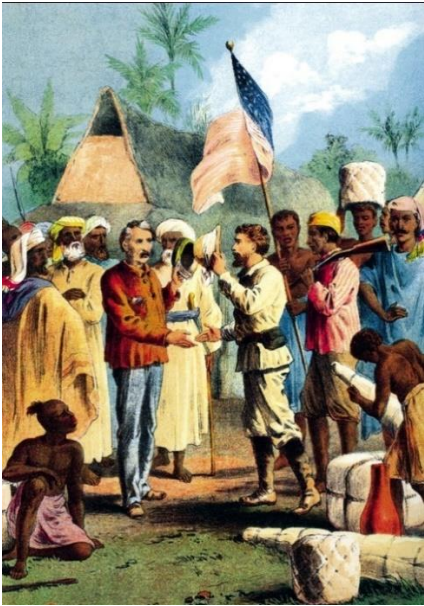


We are delighted to welcome **Ian Finlay** to Skiddaw u3a. Ian left the Lake District in August 2018 with an ambition to cycle unsupported around the world. Before leaving, he had sold his Keswick house, his two cars and had resigned from a 22-year career. He was not aiming to break records or prove anything to anybody, but wanted simply to take stock, see the world with his own eyes and perhaps scare himself a little. His talk is an absolute must for anyone interested in travel, endurance and adventure. Here is a taster:

‘Ian rode for 587 days through 29 countries. He crossed the deserts of Central Asia, and onto Australia and New Zealand. The highlight of his adventure was seven weeks in Tajikstan, including ten days and 350 miles through the iconic Wakhan Valley, which shares the border with Afghanistan. Carrying all he needed in the bags on his bike and the preconceptions of a lifetime, he did manage to scare himself a little. He returned home a changed person, humbled by the kindness of humans of all cultures, religions and status.’

Wednesday 19th April
“Dr Livingstone I Presume”

AGM – starts promptly at 10 am. Doors open from 9.30 am



Back in November 2019, **Fran Sandham** gave us a most interesting presentation recounting his adventurous journey – on foot and solo – across the continent of Africa, from the Skeleton Coast of Namibia to the Indian Ocean near Zanzibar. Fran returns to Africa in this talk: The story behind the legendary meeting in Africa in 1871 between the missing explorer Dr. David Livingstone and the fame hungry journalist Henry Morton Stanley. How their meeting proved to be the newspaper scoop of the century, bringing Stanley world fame and notoriety; the widespread controversy, hostility and personal ridicule Stanley faced on his return to ‘Europe and America after finding Livingstone; why their meeting was such a sensational news story – and why Stanley’s four words became the most famous greeting in history.

GROUP NEWS

Happy new year! The current spate of wet weather is, I hope, not damping down your enthusiasm for our group activities, especially outdoors. I know from personal experience that it has been a little frustrating for the cycling groups, although they are getting out when they can. I’ve seen the Ramblers out and about (and in the Keswick Reminder - well done, Anna!), and I’m sure there will be those who have new year’s resolutions to fulfil by trying out one or more of the multiplicity of offerings available to our members.

One area of concern is rising prices for venue hire, with some already notified. However, I hope you will agree that, with no instructor or leader costs, u3a remains excellent value for money. If fees need to rise to cover the few costs there are, I hope you will be understanding.

You may have seen in the Keswick Reminder an article about the old Pencil Factory opening up for use by community groups and I am going to the open day on 3rd February to see what facilities are available. All are welcome but you do need to sign up at <https://forms.office.com/r/c95dL3Q6ag>.

I look forward to meeting as many of our Convenors as possible at the Convenors’ Day on 8th March when we will have the opportunity to share any areas of concern, opportunities and updates.

Best Wishes

John Hunston

Email address: skiddawu3aconvenors@gmail.com

Featured Groups

Detective Fiction



In 'The Silver Blaze' by Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes is asked by the police inspector on the case whether there is any detail to which he (the inspector) should pay attention. 'To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time' says Holmes.' But' replies the inspector, 'the dog did nothing in the night-time.' 'That was the curious incident,' remarked Sherlock Holmes.'

This famous passage tells us a great deal about detective fiction: it's full of puzzles and logical challenges, it reveals how little we 'normal' people use our powers of analysis and deduction and it's dominated by unusual personalities like Holmes and Poirot, Miss Marple and Adam Dalgleish, Rebus and Falco who are clever, persistent and dedicated to the pursuit of justice.

Our Detective Fiction course started with the works and fictional world of Agatha Christie and proceeded to examine Richard Osman's modern – and spectacularly successful - contribution to crime writing. Next up was Conan Doyle, the maestro, and Ian Rankin, one of the accomplished exponents of Scottish noir.

Yet to come are the novels of the great P D James, a genre-transcending writer if ever there was one, and a consideration of detective fiction set in the historical past and the sci-fi future. Were there private detectives in ancient Rome or in medieval England? Can a robot commit murder??

Obviously, we read crime fiction for enjoyment and relaxation. But it's interesting how often the kind of books you don't think of as 'serious' novels offer so much in the way of psychological or social realism and take the lid off the respectable exterior of the families and places in which we live to reveal the secrets and tensions bubbling below the surface.

Gill Frances

SKIDDAW u3a STROLLERS CELEBRATE ITS 9TH BIRTHDAY.

Hard to believe that the very first walk of the newly created Skiddaw u3a Strollers was held on **13 January 2014** when 16 members walked from Keswick to Threlkeld, returning by bus.

So, we decided to celebrate the **9th birthday** of the group by repeating the route; of course the old railway line now has a fine new surface with excellent info boards, occasional seats and tunnels.

Starting at the Museum we enjoyed a fabulous walk, in good weather and at the end enjoyed coffee at the coffee shop at Threlkeld Village Hall. Some of the group were original members, still fit enough for the distance as long as its relatively flat!



Patricia Howell



Watersports

Over the years the memorable expression 'that there's nothing quite like messing about in boats' has never quite left me. Just how serious does one have to take it and even more so what does one do to actually make it come true?

The sense of adventure experienced when as a lad I had a go rowing on a boating lake and later launching myself off down a Sewanee River on a homemade raft made

with five-gallon oil drums takes some beating. Well, I now blame my knees for wanting to take to the water at least the idea of taking the weight off them as I do in cycling or swimming. So why not try rowing? I threw myself in at the deep end so to speak by putting myself in the hands of the Lakeland Rowing Club on Derwent Water for a Learn-to Row course for a weekend- and thankfully passed the test. At least it proved I had upper body strength but my oh my getting in and getting out was the sticky bit. And you will not mess about as a member of a regimented rowing club which is just as well when shoehorned into a coxed 'four'.

Surely, it's best to be more romantic and feel free to mess in a simple rowboat- though the choice and purchase of which could be another story. Suffice to say it was easy to get into and to take to open water; best not to be too enthusiastic with the oars as rowlocks can fall off and leave you bereft or dare to hope for a moonlight cruise. Nice though to take it easy- on a calm day and gently pull away to a steady rhythm. Take a friend or your partner if brave enough who can see ahead and guide you because you do not have eyes in the back of your head. Have a destination in mind- an island with a shingly shore to draw up upon and that well packed hamper to open. Hopefully a wind has not sprung up or the light breeze that sent you there has not changed direction. Do enjoy your picnic.

Then there's the kayak one of those 'sit on top' types- not I hasten to add an enclosed serious one like a space capsule used by Olympians forging rapids or by Eskimos amongst icebergs. They are much easier to launch and lower yourself onto- more stable than you could ever imagine with a firm backrest and with the grasp of the long paddle you feel in full control. Try rocking a little then a little more to realise stability is maintained and your confidence heightened. Time to get underway so twist and turn that paddle, no need to plunge, a gentle caress below the surface is all that's required for momentum to glide effortlessly.

Though sitting low, you have a good view forward and present a low profile to the wind. Together, that is you and your craft feel as though the distant horizon is all but yours. Vary your speed, ease up look around turnabout, drift- aha! You're messing about. alright no need to be purposeful all the time, relax, you'll get your exercise, fresh air and a change of view- even out of your comfort zone but best of all those knees will thank you for it.

Robin Mason

News from the Committee

The past year has seen Skiddaw u3a thriving with a growing membership well attended groups, an excellent summer outing to Hutton in the Forest, and a highly enjoyable Christmas Dinner in the ever reliable Skiddaw Hotel. Strangely our monthly meetings were rather sparsely attended before Christmas, but this was compensated for by a full house listening to Mark Hatton's excellent talk in January.

We are now starting to look ahead towards our AGM which will be held on April 19th, before that month's talk. There are a few things for us to consider concerning membership.

Firstly, the committee will bring a proposal concerning a reduced membership fee of £6 for those people who join between September 1st and December 31st. (You may remember that currently the full fee remains at £12 and those who join after January 1st receive the months until the April the 1st included with the full year following.) The rationale is that it seems unreasonable to pay for the full year if you attend the Open Day as a potential new member with only six months of the year remaining.

The second issue concerns Associate Members, i.e., Members of other u3as who also join ours. Early in the days of our u3a we suggested to the other members of the North Cumbria Network of u3as that a reciprocal arrangement of no payment for associates should apply. Unfortunately, this was not universally accepted, but despite that Skiddaw, along with some of the other u3as, chose not to charge an Associate Membership fee. Since then, however, the number of Associates registered with us has increased significantly and now numbers 50, representing almost 9% of total membership. There is an additional administrative workload to process Associate membership as it requires ascertaining that they are indeed a paid-up member of another u3a, but more relevantly each member incurs the cost to Skiddaw u3a of our use of the Beacon membership software, (currently £1 per member of any type), as well as their "share" of the costs of running the monthly meeting, social events, convenor meetings and the Group Support Funds. In effect, currently, ordinary members subsidise the Associate members. This was deemed reasonable when the number of Associates was very low, but less so now. We repeated a proposal that there should be a reciprocal arrangement of no payment for Associates to a meeting of the North Cumbrian Network in the Autumn, but again this was not accepted by every u3a present. The Committee is therefore going to propose at the AGM that 50% of our full membership fee be applied to Associate Members.

Thirdly and most importantly, it is a truism that all organisations need new blood if they are to survive, never mind progress, and our u3a is no exception. Added to this is the fact that I have come to the end of the statutory three years maximum allowed in our Constitution as Chair, one or two other Committee members are looking to move on and we are already short by one person for a full Executive Committee. The sad, but undeniable truth is that Skiddaw u3a will have to close

if we do not populate our Executive Committee. This will not only be because the remaining members will have a lot to do, but more seriously, the Charity Commission laws will not allow us to continue. All the enjoyment, learning and social contact that currently we all benefit from will therefore cease. I believe it is vital that some of our members consider putting themselves up for election. I am very happy to talk to anybody about what being on the Committee entails and would welcome anybody who would wish to come along to observe the next couple of Committee meetings.

I apologise for this apocalyptic tone, but this is the reality; however, might I also give my thanks to you all for supporting me in the role as Chair and reassure you that it has been a rewarding and enjoyable experience for me!

Tony Marsh, Chair

A Date for your Diary

Wednesday 19th April 2023
TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
10am prompt

This is probably our shortest but certainly our most important meeting and we need you to be there. This is your chance to find out what the committee has been up to in the past year, to put forward your ideas and to elect the committee members for the following year.

Skiddaw u3a is highly successful with 600 members and over 50 activity groups. Supporting this behind the scenes is the committee of Trustees elected from the membership. This year we have vacancies for the Chair and the Media Officer. If you would like to know more about the committee or what's involved, please contact the Chair or any committee member. Full details about the AGM will be sent to all members in March.

So, please don't leave it to others. New committee members are essential to keep the organisation buoyant, relevant and exciting. We need you to help us keep Skiddaw u3a flourishing.

Skiddaw u3a Social Secretary's Report

Skiddaw u3a saw 2022 out with a bang at their very successful Christmas Lunch at the Skiddaw Hotel, where there is always a bright and attractive Christmas atmosphere. Over 60 members got together to enjoy an excellent meal. But, just as important, it was a chance to hear about the activities of other u3a members in various activity groups. We shared our local knowledge in a "Famous Lake District Characters" Picture Quiz, and our shameful ignorance in the National Park statistics questions that followed. But all in good fun.

Roll on the Summer!



The date for the proposed visit to the RHS Gardens at Bridgewater, North Manchester, is now set at Wednesday 14th June 2023. The coach will leave Bell Close Car Park at 8.0am, leaving RHS at 4.0pm. As this year marks the 10th anniversary of Skiddaw u3a, and we have funds available, the cost of the coach will be subsidised resulting in reduced cost of £10 for members.

This amount should be forwarded by direct transfer, ASAP, **and at the latest by May 15th**, to the Skiddaw u3a Social Account: Sort Code 16 52 21, Acc. 52400226 with your name as reference.

Or by cheque made out to the Skiddaw u3a social fund and sent to:
Sue Grant, u3a, Sherwood, Braithwaite, Keswick CA12 5ST.

Please note, refunds will not be available.

The limited number of seats is almost taken, but anyone still hoping to come should contact Sue Grant immediately. suegrant1@btinternet.com

Don't forget! Membership Renewal!

It is time to renew your Membership.

Your current membership expires on **28th February**. To make sure you can continue to enjoy all your u3a activities, you need to renew it in the next few weeks. Please note that the ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES REMAIN AT £12 per person.

Full details of how to pay can be found on the membership page of our website

www.skiddawu3a.co.uk

Our preferred method is by BACS as this minimises visits to the bank. You can also pay by cheque. Cheques payable to Skiddaw u3a should be posted to the: Membership Secretary Leela Marsh, How Cottage Portinscale, CA12 5RT

Whichever method you use to pay, **please remember to quote your membership number and name.**

National and Regional News

News of droughts, floods and deadly storms is focussing minds of the urgent need to tackle climate change. National u3a are holding 2 important on-line events in March on this issue: **Climate Change - A Narrow Path Away From The Brink:** Wednesday, 1st March 2023, 10:00 – 11:30 am. Speaker: Erik Dalhuijsen is physicist, climate change activist, petroleum and renewables engineer and ocean sailor. As a systems-thinker with a deep understanding of the oil and gas industry alongside a decade of climate change analysis and advocacy, he goes beyond the obvious and towards the interconnected roots of the issue. Details: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/climate-change-a-narrow-path-away-from-the-brink-tickets-517428752327>

The Climate Crisis - and some solutions. Friday 10th March 2023, 10:00 – 11:30am. Speaker: Brenda Ainsley is a u3a member (Cotgrave and District u3a and Online u3a), a trained Climate Reality Leader and is also Community Lead for Plastic Free Cotgrave, will talk on the science behind the climate crisis. Using peer-reviewed research from institutions such as NASA, the Meteorological Office and various academic institutions. The presentation is up-to-date and draws on examples from both around the world and here in the UK. Brenda then goes on to address the all-important question of 'What can we do?' The talk concludes on an update on what is happening within the u3a to help members to learn about and react to this most pressing issue of our times. Details: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-climate-crisis-and-some-solutions-tickets-496222223027>

Both of these events are free to members but booking with Eventbrite is required and can be made through the above links

[Help available to members](#)

Hearing problems: John Howell has been researching how to improve hearing when participating in Zoom events and talks. John has summarised what he has learned. If you would like a copy, you can email john via the spotlight email:

spotlight@skiddawu3a.co.uk

Accessibility Scheme

Skiddaw u3a has a policy of ensuring all its members can attend the Monthly Meetings if they so wish. The Committee are aware that not every member can attend and have a scheme so that they do have that opportunity.

There are several reasons why members have difficulties, for instance: living in a remote rural area with no car or access to public transport, perhaps a temporary disability

resulting in the member not being able to drive, having difficulty walking or problems with mobility, sight, hearing etc.

Would you like to attend Monthly Meetings but need and would welcome assistance? Please note though, this is not a taxi service for all. Mileage costs at the appropriate rate would be paid by the passenger to the driver.

Monthly Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month apart from August and December when a Monthly Meeting will not be held. The meetings are usually held in Keswick or nearby village halls.

If you would like to request assistance to attend Monthly Meetings, then please contact Tom Rennie by email. accessibility@skiddawu3a.co.uk or phone 07761 796615

If you feel you could offer to become a volunteer driver, please contact Tom using the above contact details. *Updated 23rd June 2022*

Last Words:

A blast from the past! Ballroom dancing as it used to be before “Strictly”. Joyce Grenfell and “Stately as a Galleon”. You can watch it on YouTube here:

[\(Joyce Grenfell - Old Time Dancing \(Stately as a galleon\) - YouTube\)](#)

EDITORIAL POLICY:

Contributions should be sent to the Editors via spotlight@skiddawu3a.co.uk. Groups invited to contribute to an issue of Spotlight should try to keep their contribution to approximately 200 words, if possible. Any entry can include photographs which should be submitted as jpeg or png.

Deadline for submissions to the next issue is April 20th, 2023

Editorial Team: Gill Frances, Chris Lewis & Maggie Potts