



Learn, Laugh and Live

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2026



Moonlight, summer moonlight

'Tis moonlight, summer moonlight,
All soft and still and fair;
The solemn hour of midnight
Breathes sweet thoughts everywhere,
But most where trees are sending
Their breezy boughs on high,
Or stooping low are lending
A shelter from the sky.
And there in those wild bowers
A lovely form is laid;
Green grass and dew-steeped flowers
Wave gently round her head.

Emily Jane Bronte

Welcome to our Summer Newsletter – Maureen (Chair).

What a difference 6 months can make; we have gone through so many changes.

When Slitting Mill Victory Hall closed for 3 months, we didn't know what we would be returning to.

I am pleased to say that it has exceeded all of my expectations.

I'm also pleased to welcome our new Committee Members, who have attended two committee meetings and are getting involved and contributing to making us a vibrant and engaging team.

If you have any ideas you would like to discuss, just seek one of us out. Look for the Blue Lanyards!

I am happy to see that our other groups are running along nicely, but more members are always welcome. Why not try something different, we have plenty to choose from.

Unfortunately, we are having to move premises for the groups meeting at Heddin's Ford micro pub to the Fiction and Fairy lights Bookshop, which is still in the High Street, Hednesford.

Our thanks and very best wishes go to Kelly, who has not only let us use the pub, but has supported and helped us, she has even joined in with the groups, for which we very grateful.

Sadly, she is unable to continue due to health reasons and we wish her all the very best for her future.

Now we are looking forward to working with Kim Nash at Fiction and Fairy lights Bookshop.

Most of the groups will transfer across, but unfortunately, due to technical reasons, not all groups can at the moment, however, we are to trying to work things out to get back on track soon.

As I visit various groups, from time to time I recognise the need for people to come together for no other reason than to simply have a chat to each other, so, to this end, and talking it over with other committee members, we decided to create the new Coffee Morning, which is held on the fourth Tuesday of each month at Slitting Mill ably assisted by a group of volunteers. It will be reviewed to see if there is a need and only your participation will decide on its continuation.

So, just remember that this is not my u3a, but your u3a and its success or failure is in your hands.

If you support us, we will succeed together.

Art Appreciation Group – Leader Pauline Foster

This group is no longer meeting due to the lack of a suitable venue. If there is a change, members will be informed.

Boules Group – Leader Carole Howard



This years boules group started very wet! On the 12th, March, 9th April, 14th May there was heavy rain!

I was away 11th June – yet more rain. Then glorious hot weather on 9th July Chris and Robert lead the group, however it was extremely warm!

It's not been a very successful year so far but we intend to plod on ! Please make a note of the second Thursday in the month at 2 pm at Slitting Mill. No experience needed, boules are provided. We also

have lots of laughs too!

Comparative Religions – Leaders Joan Gipton and Pauline Foster

Comparative Religion will be on the third Tuesday of each month at 11.00am at the Fiction and Fairy Lights book shop in Hednesford. We are continuing to learn about the different faiths in the world and hope to visit more places of worship in the future.

😊 Cherry Bakewell

A few weekends ago we had my daughter's two children (Lila and James) staying with us. At one point, I gave each of them a cherry bakewell cake and was heartened when they both gave an enthusiastic "thank you". A short time later, Lila brought her cake back minus the cherry, so I asked her where was the cherry? She said she did not like the cherry so she gave it to James. Si I asked why did she not like it if she had not tasted it. She said that James told her she would not like it!

Crown Green Bowling – Leader Andy Cowan



The U3A Cannock Chase Crown Green Bowling Group is once again well attended. With New Members given free tuition and all the equipment provided, it is an easy way of getting fit and following an outdoor pursuit for 6 Months of the year.

Due to the late closure of the Bowling Green in 2025, this year the Bowling Green will close on Friday 18th September 2026 for a valuable maintenance programme to begin.

I am now trying to book the 18th September 2026 as our Members Lunchtime function in the Restaurant at the Rag at Rawnsley.

Cycling Group – Leader Peter Harding



The heatwave has now subsided so the cycling group is back on the road without the need of multiple water bottles to prevent dehydration in the heat. Latest trip was from Lichfield and along some quiet country lanes to a cafe stop overlooking Chasewater. Our route followed several stretches of some National Cycle Routes which usually follow good quiet roads around our countryside. These routes are marked by blue signs with a bicycle logo on it and the route number. Picture is of the U3A cyclists at the station of Chasewater Light Railway. All are welcome to join our short rides where any bike is fine - even electrically assisted ones!

French (Advanced) – Leader Maggie Causer



Our Advanced French group has continued to go from strength to strength during fortnightly Zoom sessions. We are now an established group of 9 enthusiastic learners and we would love to have new members who have a love of learning and who wish to improve on their language skills.

Our most recent topic was inspired by an article which I read in the U3A Spring magazine about older people's attitudes to Information Technology and the Internet I decided to ask the group questions about their knowledge and use of new technologies. Most of us had used some basics in our workplace and are now relatively confident with booking holidays, checking in on line, banking, shopping, paying bills, ordering medications on the NHS app and of course using

Zoom.

We all admitted to needing help at some stage from younger relatives and friends Angie finds the Internet indispensable for a whole range of activities and has her “technical assistant” husband Mike on hand. She shies away from social media sites and is also worried about the risk of isolation if we do everything online. Did you know that you can get free books on “Borrowbox” if you can’t get to the library? Whilst seeing the advantages of new technologies Derek doesn’t use the internet as widely as others but gets help from his daughter as needed. He cannot compete with his young grandchildren who use online games. Although Hazel may occasionally seek help from her niece she is very confident with most aspects of new technologies. She did however have to revert to buying a train ticket at the ticket office when the machine in Switzerland spoke to her in German. Jackie reserves her Smartphone for telephone calls and text messages and is wary of fraudulent applications.

Janice would be lost without Zoom and WhatsApp to keep in touch with her family who live abroad. When people became more aware of wider internet usage Karen didn’t think she needed it. She now describes her smartphone as her third arm and uses it for almost everything in her daily life, including watching TV and films. I personally still prefer the TV to my iPad When Michelle retired she realised that she would no longer have any in house technical support but soon discovered You Tube and my personal friend “Mr. Google” were there to answer most of her questions. Chris took a different approach to the questions and concentrated on the disadvantages of new technologies and in particular the use of AI, Artificial Intelligence. What are the implications for the work prospects of future generations if we are taken over by bots/robots who don’t answer back, take paternity/maternity leave, pull sickies and are happy to work 24/7?

Chris is now leading the group whilst I am in hospital and discussions on AI will continue We meet on Zoom on the first and third Friday of the month from 14h-16h and would be delighted to welcome more faces to our group. It’s not as difficult as it sounds and we have a lot of laughs along the way. Please feel free to sit in on one of our sessions.

Garden Group – Valma Cooper



The Garden Group continues to meet each month to visit inspirational gardens in the local area and occasionally have Speakers in the colder months. We are small friendly bunch of about 15-20 Members, we travel independently or car share to the different gardens and always ensure no one is left out or miss out if they are on their own. One of the nicest aspects of our garden visits is the friendship forged over a cuppa and hopefully a nice slice of cake or scone after a stroll around a beautiful garden. Why not join us, we have 2 more garden visits planned in August and September and a Speaker in October and next year we will again have a full itinerary planned

History Group – Leader Maureen Leeson

Martyn Hall continues to entertain and educate us with his unique insight into our British History.

We have arrived in Modern Times (The Industrial Revolution).

With plenty of intriguing and interesting information to come, as we are entering “The Great Victorian Era”

I would like to express my thanks to Martyn for all his time and hard work on our behalf.

NEW GROUP: The Lunch Bunch – Leaders Robin Kingston, Maureen Leeson and Valma Cooper and



Since the last Newsletter a new Group has formed which is proving very popular. The Lunch Bunch, which is completely different from the previous Lunch Group with new Leaders and Members, is a monthly get together to enjoy Lunch at local Venue in the area. This is a friendly relaxed band of Members who enjoy each other company whilst tucking into a lovely Lunch. So far we have visited Tumbledown Farm, a Mediterranean type Restaurant along the A5 and the Barley Mow at Milford. In July it's the traditional Malt Shovel in Chorley. We are trying to introduce different types of foods to suit all taste. If you would like to join us you would be very welcome. The plans for our Augusts Lunch will be advertised very soon so just get in touch with Valma or Robin or cannockchaseu3a@gmail.com for details.

Music Appreciation – Leader Pauline Foster

This group is no longer meeting due to the lack of a suitable venue. If there is a change, members will be informed.

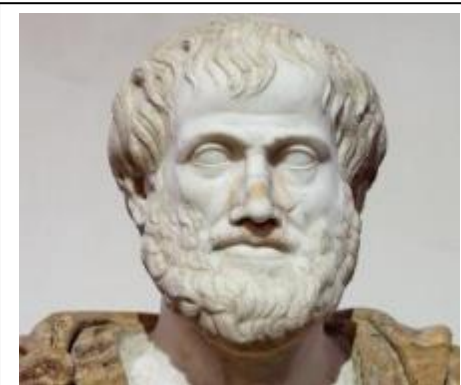


Nordic Walking - Group Leader Alan Shaw

If you like walking but the condition of your ankles, knees or hips makes this difficult, you can benefit from taking up Nordic walking. This consists of using two adapted ski poles (or two telescopic walking/trekking poles) for assisted walking and using more of your upper body muscles to take the strain off your lower limbs and joints. Nordic Walking sticks are not supplied, so you will need your own; they can be obtained from Amazon for as little as £20 (contact the Group Leader for details). If you have not done this previously, full instructions

will be given to beginners by a trained instructor. We now have a short walk for new starters and those less mobile plus a longer walk for those more experienced members. And there is always the option for a coffee and chat when we've all finished.

Philosophy Groups 1 & 2 – Leaders Joan Gripton and Pauline Foster



Because of changes that have taken place regarding Heddings Ford in, future meetings will now take place at Fiction and Fairy Lights book shop in Hednesford.

Photography – Leader Alan Shaw



The main aims of this group are:

- 1) To help people inexperienced in using mobile phones and other digital cameras to avoid the frequent mistakes made by untrained photographers
- 2) To help members use built-in or freely-available editing software to correct and/or improve their photos
- 3) To explore various elements of composition that will give members' photos better "eye appeal"
- 4) To encourage members to submit their photos each month for anonymous scoring by their fellow members
- 5) Please note that no other camera club or photo group in the region welcomes people who take photos using their smartphones.

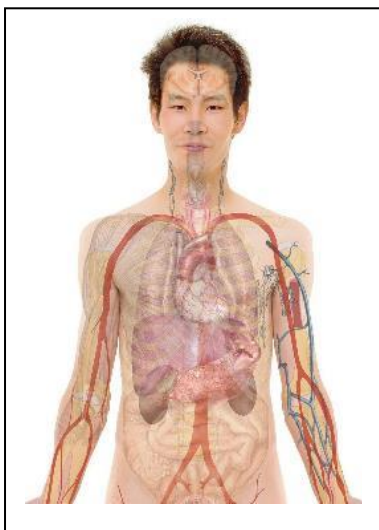
In 2026 we began reviewing previously-scored members' photos and inviting members to make comments and suggestions for improvements. This has proved quite popular with everyone. We are also looking occasionally at photos by other U3A groups.

Poetry Appreciation – Leader Carol Deakin



Our group of up to 10 people meet on the 3rd Wednesday. From July we will meet upstairs at Fiction and Fairylights Bookshop in Hednesford. It would be great to have a few more members to join our friendly group. Our theme this month is Weddings.

Science and Technology – Leader Barry James



If you've ever wondered how all sorts of things around you work, whether it be old or futuristic, human body related, inventions of pioneers, then look no further, the Science Group has the answers.

The schedule for later this year is as follows:

- Aug 6th: Plate Tectonics with Martyn Hall
- Sept 3rd: RED for Danger: Railway Signalling with Robin Mathams
- Oct 1st: Vitamin C with Alan Shaw
- Nov 5th: The Periodic Table of Elements with Brian Denny
- January 7th Scientific Measurement with Alan Shaw

Come along, you might be surprised what you can learn about.

We meet the first Thursday of the month, 2pm in Slitting Mill village hall.

Co-ordinator: Contact at barrykjames@yahoo.com

Computers – a Poem by Kath Wheatly

I've finished my computer course at Hednesford library
But somehow after twelve long hours, I don't think its for me
I've tapped, clicked and caps locked and thought my time well spent
But later found, to my dismay, my e-mail never went!
They say I should do e-mails but really I don't care
I'd rather pick the phone up and sit upon the stair
I like the sound of my voice and other peoples' too
I like to see a human face, you don't get that on Yahoo
The grandkids are so clever, at school it is their core
I'd rather see them playing out but then I'm a dinosaur
Buy your books on Amazon, you'll never be the same
Neither will the bookshops as they al close down their name
They say, "click on E-bay, go and surf the net"
But I'm happy with the charity shops, they're all I need as yet
So I thought I'd bring up E-bay, there's something I might learn
Between you, me and the gatepost, I much prefer Age Concern
Try Internet Explorer, I was told today
Then go tap into Google, you'll soon be on your way
It asked me for my password and I entered it with glee
The word flashed up "Invalid", I don't think it likes me
They say patience is a virtue and it will come in time
But if I'm really honest, I'd rather write this rhyme
I'm writing here in comfort – a pad, a pen and tea
Without that damned computer resting on my knee
To be computer literate, you need not just the skill
But also lots of aptitude and most of all the will
I can see the advantages of this electronic toy
But I'd rather read a book and let the world go by
I might attend the next course, they are determined you see
To drag me kicking and screaming into the 21st Century

Singing For Pleasure - Leader Dianne Hooper



Sadly we have no alternative venue for the Singing group, so, unless we find alternative premises with the necessary equipment, it is no more,. If anyone can suggest somewhere with access to a Smart TV, could they please get in touch.

!

Something to Make you Laugh (or at least Smile)

😄 Amusing Quotes

"I remember it like it was yesterday. But I don't really remember yesterday all that well." - John Dory

"Those people who think they know everything are an annoyance to those of us who do." - Isaac Asimov

"All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt." - Charles M. Schulz

"My husband and I fell in love at first sight. Maybe I should have taken a second look." - Halley Reed

"As I learned from growing up, you don't mess with your grandmother." - Prince William

"Everybody knows how to raise children, except the people who have them." - P. J. O'Rourke

"As you get older, three things happen. The first is your memory goes, and I can't remember the other two."
- Norman Wisdom

"Old age is like everything else. To make a success of it, you've got to start young." - Theodore Roosevelt

"Love is blind but marriage is a real eye-opener." - Pauline Thomason

"The man who says his wife can't take a joke, forgets that she took him." - Oscar Wilde

"You know you're getting old when the candles cost more than the cake." - Bob Hope

"My friends tell me I have an intimacy problem. But they don't really know me." - Garry Shandling

"I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me." - Noel Coward

"I was surprised when I started getting old. I always thought it was one of those things that would happen to someone else." - George Carlin

"Do not take life too seriously. You will never get out of it alive." - Edward Hubbard

"I told my doctor I broke my arm in two places. He advised me to keep out of those places." - Rodney Dangerfield

Tai Chi Thursday Group – Leader Maureen Leeson and Joan



We are really pleased to say that our Thursday Tai Chi Group has gone from strength to strength this year.

Over the closure period of Slitting Mill Victory Hall, we did wonder if people would have made alternative arrangements for their Thursday mornings, but no, everyone is back and we have also welcomed new members.

The beginner's group is quickly becoming a group of its own, under the guidance of Joan, they have expanded to THE GREAT OUTDOORS, well, into the garden at the back of Slitting Mill, weather permitting.

Tai Chi and Exercise Monday Group - Leaders Bryn Wellings and Margaret Wall

Having lost Carol from leading our Monday Tai Chi Group due to family commitments, it is really pleasing to see that two members have taken up the challenge to keep this class running.

Bryn Wellings is leading the Tai Chi and Margaret Wall the Wellbeing Exercises and this is an excellent complementary combination of gentle exercise proving to be popular with members.

So thank you to our new "Dynamic Duo" Bryn and Margaret, in whose hands Monday Tai Chi has a bright future.

Walking Group - Leader Angela Allison



The walking group meet on the last Tuesday of the month for a local walk. The usual distance is 3-4 miles.

Our starting points vary and have included Cannock Chase, Burntwood, Hammerwich and Rugeley.

We are a friendly group who enjoy walking regardless of the weather. We aim to have a refreshment stop at the end of the walk. This can be a cafe or local hostelry.

Wedding Vows("till death us do part"?)

In the early part of the 20th century, couples getting married were generally quite sincere about their wedding vows and people getting married then tended to stay together for quite a long time and separations and divorces were relatively rare. At that time, in the USA, the duration of first marriages was around 36-40 years before divorce (which was very expensive at the time). There are no corresponding reliable figures for the UK but one factor that bound couples together was taking on a mortgage to buy a house. This was because it was only the husband's name on the mortgage documents and divorce was not a viable option, as it would leave the wife homeless. This practice continued well into the second half of the 20th century.

In 1969, President Ronald Reagan introduced legislation to allow “no fault” divorces, which made the process of divorce much cheaper and much faster (and possibly less traumatic?). In the USA the divorce rate doubled by 1980, particularly among the less well off. This concept was rapidly adopted in many countries around the world and divorce rates soared globally. The latest figures in the USA for the duration of first-time marriages to divorce is running at about 8 years!

Here are a few curios items relating to the above:

As of 2019, one in 3 marriages were considered to be “low sex” or “no sex”

Herbert and Zelmyra Fisher were married for a world record 86 years before Herbert passed away at the age of 106.

Studies show that three quarters of marriages that start with an affair end up in divorce.

Linda Wolfe holds the world record for a woman with the most marriages at 23 times!

The global wedding industry is worth over 300 million dollars and in the USA that is about 60 billion dollars.

PREVIOUS AND FUTURE EVENTS

Summer Day Trip to Churnet Valley Steam Railway.



On a sunny day in June, 53 members clambered aboard a coach in Hednesford to travel through the beautiful Staffordshire countryside to Churnet Valley for a trip on a heritage steam train. A cream tea and a cuppa was served on board whilst we chugged through the fields and woodlands of this lovely area. The smell of the engine with the occasional whiff of smoke from the chimney seeping into the carriage and the clicking-clack of the rails evoked so many happy childhood memories. I think we all enjoyed our nostalgic trip back in time!

SUMMER SOCIAL - Prosecco, Strawberries and Cream Tea!



We had a lovely afternoon get-together in July for 70 members. We joined in and sang along with local lass, Becca Gee, as she entertained us to all the old 60/70 pop songs that we remember well. Some of us even had a little dance!!!! All this whilst we tucked into a cream tea with delicious strawberries and generous amounts of Prosecco. What's not to like and enjoy?

We really enjoy putting on these events for our Members and it's worth all the hard work because we have such lovely feedback from those attending. So don't miss out - the next one will be around Christmas time.

Trip to Sandfields Victorian Pumping Station .



On Friday 23rd October at 2pm we are visiting Sandfields Pumping Station in Lichfield. The visit to this unique historic 19th Century Pumping Station starts with a short introduction and hot drinks then Volunteers will take us in small groups around the Victorian Pumping Station telling us about the history and how they are preserving our important industrial heritage. Cost will be £6pp, there is no transport provided but we can arrange car share if required. Further details will be circulated in August for names of Members interested.

FUTURE EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY.

All these Groups and events are open to all members.

AUGUST.

Tuesday 4th August	History Group. "Meet the Victorians".
Thursday 6th August	A visit to Shropshire Petal Fields by Garden Group, all welcome.
Tuesday 11th August	Monthly Speaker Meeting. A Belly Dancing demonstration.
Thursday 20th August	Garden Group Visit to NGS Garden in Cheslyn Hay
Wed 26th August	Lunch Bunch. Venue TBC

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 1st Sept	History Group. "The Edwardians"
Tuesday 8th Sept	Monthly Speaker. "The Musicals of Roger & Hammerstein".
Thurs 17th Sept	Garden Group. Visit to The Mission, Whiston
We'd 30th Sept	Lunch Bunch. TBC

OCTOBER

Tuesday 8th October	History Group. "The Great War".
Tuesday 13th October	Monthly Speaker. "History with Dividends" The Co-Op.
Thursday 15th October	Garden Group Speaker at SMVH.
Friday 23rd October	Visit to Sandfields Victorian Pumping Station, Lichfield.
Weds 28th October	Lunch Bunch. Venue TBC

November

Tuesday 3rd November	History Group. "Between the Wars".
Tuesday 10th November	Monthly Speaker. "Make do and Mend" by Kath Reynolds.
Weds 25th November	Lunch Bunch venue to TBC

December

Tuesday 1st December	History Group. "World War II".
Thursday 3rd December	Christmas Lunch at the Barns Restaurant.
Tuesday 8th December	Christmas Social with an all-round Entertainer

COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2026/27

Name	Committee Position
Maureen Leeson	Chairperson

Vacant	Vice Chairperson
Valma Cooper	Secretary
Robert Leeson	Treasurer
Julya New	Membership Secretary
Carole Howard	Events Coordinator
Maggie Causer	Speaker Secretary
Helen Stokes	Web Administrator
Angela Alison	Committee Member
Pauline di Pretoro	Committee Member
Kath Wheatley	Committee Member
Chris Lowries	Committee Member
Rob Lowries	Committee Member
Lesley Hipkiss	Committee Member
Jackie Bowdler	Committee Member
Margaret Wall	Committee Member
Jackie Allen	Committee Member
Robin Kingston	Committee Member
Alan Shaw	Produces Newsletter
Barry James	Circulates emails to members

Additional Information

Web-site

Our website is located at [Cannock Chase u3a: Welcome to Cannock Chase u3a \(u3asites.org.uk\)](http://Cannock Chase u3a: Welcome to Cannock Chase u3a (u3asites.org.uk))

In addition to the Home page, there are sections on Welcome, Groups, Events, Photos, Reports, Local Links and Contacts, which amounts to a great deal of useful information.

Because Helen Stocks is taking over from Ian Gordon, she is formulating some ideas and will no doubt be in touch with members in the not too distant future.

Our e-mail address is cannockchaseu3a@gmail.com

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

Last year I felt at a very low ebb and felt that things were getting on top of me. I really felt sad when the children left the nest, my dearest father passed away and my husband had left me for a younger model. Then I had a serious car accident and it took quite some time in recovery. My physical and mental health were in decline and I felt well and truly fed up.

I dragged myself to a U3A group meeting and got chatting to someone I did not know that well. I poured out my heart to her (I'll call her Babs – not her real name) and she was clearly empathetic to my circumstances. She asked me to join her soon afterwards to discuss the matter further over a cup of coffee.

She told me some of her own life story; it was different but equally traumatic. She explained that what really helped her was to write down a list which was headed "Counting my Blessings". She showed me her own list that she had made some time ago and explained how it lifted her spirits over time when she re-read the list several times. I was amazed that she had 40 items on her list. When I was writing my own list later, one thought kept popping into my head; there are many people in this world in a far worse situation. Over the next few weeks I met Babs a few times more and she helped me to increase my list. Then – a few weeks later – she introduced me to something else which she said had helped her even more; positive mental attitude. I'd heard about this but knew very little. When I came to understand what this was all about and used it for myself, I realised that it had powerful healing properties.

Then Babs dropped a bombshell. She was moving to live in the South West with her new partner and she seemed truly happy. I was by now feeling much happier myself and my self-confidence and mental attitude were getting back to normal. I'm now enjoying life to the full.

I've sent you this letter so that you can share it with your members; who knows, it might benefit someone in the future?

Yours faithfully – Name Given

Ode to Hednesford

I'm just a born and bred Brummie, with Bull Ring and shops in my head,
I've loved it since I had a dummy, but I came to Hednesford instead.
I knew that you had an old Raceway, and miners had once worked a pit,
I saw on a map where the Chase lay, but thought it was "up North a bit.
Our friends said, "You'll not last through Monday", they're 40 years back in the past,
The buses don't run on a Sunday, the trains don't get anywhere fast.
But the years have passed since I found you, community driven and proud,
Many good things still surround you, so just let me say them out loud.
Your hard-working roots are no mystery, you still know manners are free,
I haven't your knowledge of history, but I know that I like what I see.

Where else are the streets any cleaner, and everything all close to hand,

Environment thinking is greener,,and regeneration is planned.

I love Hednesford Town and its flowers, the clock with its old fashioned chime,

A place to relax and its ours, Hold on to your "Step back in time".

Anon

Facebook

You can find our Facebook page simply by inserting a search Cannock Chase U3A.

And Finally ...

Many thanks to all our members who have taken the time and trouble to make publishing this Newsletter possible. If you have any questions, observations or comments about this Newsletter, please e-mail to the Editor:

Alan Shaw – [alan.arty.shaw @outlook.com](mailto:alan.arty.shaw@outlook.com)