

The Bray Heads U3A
AGM Thursday, 3rd December 2020.

Secretary's Report

The Bray Heads U3A Group have had a challenging time this year. We started back after our summer break on September 5th, with our first meeting of the year, Brian White's talk on 'Josephine Heffernan and the Bray Connection.' September 19th we had our AGM and then we settled into our programme of events and talks. Little did we know what changes we were to face in six months time.

Our Programme/Activities began with the following excellent speakers on a variety of topics.

September We had the first of our planned outings – a Guided tour of the Joyce Tower in Sandycove.

October Sister Orla Treacy gave a moving talk entitled 'Courage to Move' and our members generously donated towards Sister Orla's funds. This was followed by Dr. Dolores McKenna on 'William Trevor the writer and his work'.

We had Community Garda Suzanne Byrne accompanied by Ciaran Hayden of Greystones Fire Brigade with excellent advice on 'Keeping safe at home'. Then Anne Anderson gave an enlightening talk on the 'EU/US Relationship.'

November topics included:

'The art of Falconry & Birds of Prey' – Dr. Maurice Nicholson
'Sustainable Energy Technology for our Homes and Country' – members of U3A sub-group on Climate Change.
'A century of Irish International Diplomacy 1919–2019' by Dr. Michael Kennedy

December 12th we had our second U3A Christmas celebration and get together. Members were once again very generous bringing beautifully wrapped Christmas gifts for children which the Vincent de Paul were delighted to accept and distribute.

January 2020

'The many lives of a foreign correspondent' by Conor O'Clery
'The Brontes' – Anne Johnston & Valerie Hand

February:

'Elderhood' – Brian Keenan
'Universal Design' – Dr. Gerald Craddock
Our second outing was to the Seamus Heaney Exhibition and workshop.

March: Scheduled Programme and COVID-19

‘Climate Change’ – Professor John Fitzgerald.

Then March brought our first Covid lockdown and our Co-ordinating Team had to resort to a new means of keeping our group in action.

The Team began by linking up with various organisations involved in action and information to assist citizens and communities at this difficult time, gathering together as much information as it could and sharing it with members on an ongoing basis over the following months. This included information about the COVID-19 virus itself; the official advice being issued about protecting ourselves and our loved ones; support services of various kinds available for our members to draw upon; and links to various online recreational activities online.

At the same time, Joe set about investigating the feasibility of, and options for, resuming our Group meetings in a virtual format and, having identified the Zoom app as the best option, setting this up, testing it, helping members to connect to it assisting speakers who agreed to deliver talks to our Group in this format to prepare for this.. Some of our scheduled speakers did not feel in a position to give their talks in this format and these talks will hopefully be delivered at a later time when we may be able to meet again at Bray Golf Club. However, most of our speakers were extremely helpful and enthusiastic and all agreed to give their talks through this medium and we were delighted that most of our members were ready to participate in these virtual meetings. The ‘Chat Room’ get-togethers at the end of our meetings, which Joe organized and facilitates, have also proved to be very popular.

Our first zoom meeting was in **April**, ‘Creative writing’ with Liz McManus

Followed in **May** by:

‘Communism, Sex and all that Jazz’ – Professor Fearghal McGarry

‘Ancient DNA & Irish Origins’ – Dr. Dan Bradley

June:

‘Kipling’s Kim’ – Prof. Peter Lynch

‘The Leslie Family’ – Mark Leslie

July:

‘Stone Crosses of South Dublin and North Wicklow’ – Rachel Moss

‘Margaret Thatcher & Ireland’ – Frank Sheridan

‘The EU and the Pandemic’ – Marie Cross

‘Georgian Houses’ – Patricia McCarthy

We took our summer break in **August**.

Our **September** programme kicked off with an uplifting ‘Introduction to the Blues’ with Frank Gallagher.

Followed by:

‘Zero Carbon Economy’ – Sinéad Mercier

‘Native Wild Flowers’ – Finola Finlay

October:

‘Biodiversity and Government targets’ – Steven Matthews, TD

‘Wicklow’s Traditional Farmhouses’ - Christiaan Corlett

‘A Book and A Bell – Glendalough’ – Mary Kelly

‘Fossil Fuel Diversity Movement’ – Louise Fitzgerald

‘Covid 19’ – Professor Luke O’Neill

November

‘Swift and his World’ – Professor Andrew Carpenter

Sub Groups:

In addition to the Climate Action Sub-Group (CASG) set up last year, further Sub-Groups were set up during the year: a new History and Archaeology one (HASG); a small Writing Group; and a Walking Group, which we will hear about later from their leaders.

We have come a long way from our inaugural meeting of the group on 6th September 2018. Our membership has grown and Nikki will give an update on our membership. We have been fortunate that our members have remained enthusiastic and supportive in these difficult times and it is encouraging to see so many participate on our Zoom meetings. There may be members who have difficulty accessing Zoom and if any of our team can be of help with technology please just ask.

Co-Ordinating Team:

Our Co-Ordinating team held 14 team meetings since our AGM in 2019.

Facing the challenges of Covid we also moved our team meetings to Zoom in March.

TBH-U3A Group & The Wicklow Public Participation Network (WPPN)

Following Agreement by members at the 2019 AGM to our Group joining the WPPN, we did so shortly afterwards. The link proved useful for connections during the early months of COVID-19 restrictions.