

# PLYMSTOCK & DISTRICT U3A

## DISCUSSION GROUP

### RECORD OF PAST MEETINGS – 2023

**5<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Botterell (JB)

Tony Starkey (TS)

David Mayes (DM)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Di Smart (DS)

Robin Gray (RG)

Ian Scott (IS)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – Compared to this time last year, how safe do you feel? If you have experienced any changes, please explain in what ways?

JB – Do you feel you can trust anything these days?

TS – Is it time that the BBC licence fee is scrapped, and all channels generate their own income?

JS – Are Buckingham Palace handling the Harry and Meghan issue properly by not commenting?

JP – Is it time to do away with the current honours system?

MT – Are we right to spend so much money on space exploration in the current circumstances?

**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Patch (JP)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Ian Scott (IS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – Can there be any long-term prospect of peace in Europe as long as Putin’s regime remains in power in Russia, even if Ukraine fully expels its Russian invaders?

TS – What changes, if any, have you made to your lifestyle to combat the increased cost of living?

BT – Donderry is predicted to be totally flooded in 70 years’ time. How is society going to handle such issues?

SC – Is Government intransigence over negotiating public sector wages stifling the growth that they are so keen to promote, along with stifling the delivery of decent public services?

IS – Recently environmental groups successfully acted such that a ship delivering diesel turned around and went elsewhere. Are such direct actions justified?

**2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Patch (JP)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

John Botterell (JB)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Ian Scott (IS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

David Mayes (DM)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – Is a meaningful peace plan for the Ukraine conflict remotely feasible?

JB – Is the English education system letting down the students and the country?

TS – Given that local authorities have to provide a refuse collection service, is it not time they were obliged to provide a body disposal service for those who believe a dead body is just debris?

MT – What can be done to deal with anti-semitism in Plymouth, and were you aware of a problem here?

BT – An initiative has been launched to seek volunteers to monitor that prisoners in Dartmoor are treated fairly. Do you see this as a priority for society?

RG – Is it right that the DUP is holding the country to ransom over the Northern Ireland Assembly?

**6<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

John Patch (JP)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Ian Scott (IS)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – It appears that the main outcome from the recent China-Russia summit was an understanding that western democracies are in terminal decline, resulting eventually in a new world order. Is their assessment correct?

MT – Is the quotation 'Man produces evil as a bee produces honey' accurate?

IS – A major issue of the Brexit referendum was better border control. In retrospect, was this such a good idea?

BT – Has the country now come to accept Camilla as Queen?

JS – How would you feel if you woke up to see a Banksy painting on your wall?

RG – What is 'cakeism'? (It was then explained and discussed).

**4<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Ian Scott (IS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

David Mayes (DM)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – Today, for the first time, we have to display photo ID to vote. Given that there have been only 9 prosecutions in UK for electoral fraud in the last 5 years, what do you see to be the Government's agenda in pushing this through?

MT – Is our democracy being eroded?

DS – How many people nowadays regard it as relevant to swear an oath on the Bible?

RG – Relaxing laws on gambling 15 years ago has resulted in many serious problems, including many suicides, some of them children. How should this be addressed?

JB – Is it an irony that an expensive Coronation is being publicly financed when adverts are telling us that 14 million UK citizens cannot feed themselves?

SC – Are we now suffering from 'long-Boris'?

**1<sup>st</sup> June 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Sue Clements (SC)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

David Mayes (DM)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – Considering the number of people likely to be directly affected, is public dialogue on trans-gender issues not disproportionately excessive, and is this contributing to the issue having become so polarised?

SC – Why don't we reserve our anger for those who's lies really affect us?

TS – Do you believe we live in a nanny state?

JB – It has been suggested that seaweed could become a major source of food for the future. Would you be happy to eat it in quantity?

JP – Do you support HM Government or Baroness Hallett regarding the release of unredacted documents for the Covid inquiry?

DM – How should one's 'rightful inheritance' be protected?

**6<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Patch (JP)

Ian Scott (IS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

David Mayes (DM)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – Should the Government be issuing fresh licences for North Sea oil and gas exploration, given that the burning of fossil fuels is the major contributor to man-made global warming?

IS – Is this country being stupid allowing the current level of gambling advertising, along with the NHS establishing ventures for gambling treatments?

JB – Can the National Trust continue much longer in its current form?

MC – What sort of example of sportsmanship has been set by the Jonny Bairstow dismissal at the last Ashes Test Match, especially for young people?

TS – Why has Nigel Farage had his bank account closed, and should they be making moral judgements in making their decisions?

MT – Should we worry about the lack of EU rules on our food standards and animal welfare?

## 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2023 – our 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

### Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Patch (JP)

Ian Scott (IS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

David Mayes (DM)

### Questions asked :-

DT – If USA does not remain steadfast in resisting Donald Trump's distraction tactics regarding his latest and most serious indictment, can our democratic and free way of life survive as a geopolitical force?

TS – Shoplifting is now commonplace and often organised by criminal gangs. How can it be stopped?

DS – Why is there so much food waste? Could it be aggravated by 'Use By' dates?

RG – Are mental health issues being given too much prominence?

IS – Should the Prime Minister be rolling back on the green agenda for the short term attraction of votes?





**31<sup>st</sup> August 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Patch (JP)

Ian Scott (IS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

David Mayes (DM)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – Is the ULEZ charge effective at achieving its objectives, targeted fairly, or just another cash cow?

TS – Should the managers responsible for Lucy Letby's patch at the Countess of Chester Hospital be charged with complicity to her crimes?

IS – Should descendants be held responsible for the misdemeanours of their ancestors, e.g. slave traders?

MC – Should patients respond to doctors' and nurses' strikes by going on strike themselves?

SC – Having turned our back on the EU, our biggest trading partner, are we now forced to beg for trade with the likes of China and Saudi Arabia?

BT – Should we crack down on low quality university courses?

**5<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Patch (JP)

Ian Scott (IS)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

David Mayes (DM)

Paul Kortz (PK)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – What are your main hopes and fears for the rapidly increasing presence of artificial intelligence (AI), and which of these two emotions is the more prominent for you personally?

RG – How will moral standards be maintained if religious observance is declining?

JB – 23<sup>rd</sup> March is International Day of Poetry, but UK has its own day (today). Is poetry an essential part of our culture, or is it an irrelevant waste of time?

JS – Do you agree with pushing back the moratorium on petrol and diesel on new vehicles from 2030 to 2035?

IS – Are hard borders for Britain achievable or desirable?

**2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Robin Gray (RG)

Ian Scott (IS)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Patch (JP)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – Can Israelis and Palestinians ever establish long-term peaceful co-existence, and if so, what is required to enable this to happen?

JP – Is the Covid enquiry making you happier or more depressed?

TS – Do you have a problem contacting your surgery?

IS – Should the NHS be reformed?

JS – Do you think the sweeping 20mph speed limits introduced in Wales will work?

**7<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

**Present :-**

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Ian Scott (IS)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

John Patch (JP)

**Questions asked :-**

DT – The right of self-defence is enshrined in the UN Charter. We have regularly been reminded recently that Goliath has the right of self-defence against David, but David equally has that same right against Goliath, but by what means?

IS – Do you feel guilt about the colonial era, and should reparations be made?

BT – What is your view about sending asylum seekers to Rwanda?

JB – What should we do about the homeless people on Plymouth streets?

TS – Was the communist doctrine – “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” – an ideal but unachievable concept?