

U3A National Conference, 2015 Nottingham

Chair, Lesley Witton, and Vice Chair, Tina Kelly attended the National Conference in Nottingham.

It was a wonderful opportunity to meet other members and to learn how other groups operate – and to discover that we are doing many of the right things!

On the first day we met our Regional Trustee, Jenny Carley, and she passed on some words of wisdom and encouragement.

Wednesday was a very full day with workshops and discussion groups to attend. Tina went to workshops on *Singing for Health* and *Learning Languages in Later Life* and I went to *Membership Management Systems* and *University Partnerships*. The discussion groups we attended were *Group co-ordinators* and *Encouraging committee volunteers* (Tina) and *Chairmen and Encouraging new interest groups* (me). We will share what we have learned with the committee and are very happy to discuss anything of interest with individual members – just come and ask!

After dinner on Wednesday evening, we were treated to a very enjoyable presentation by the GEM Connection, a Ladies Barbershop Chorus. GEM stands for Great East Midlands and the group was founded in 1998 by 23 enthusiastic female singers. The chorus now has over 50 members and they have won a number of awards.

The first event on Thursday was a fascinating lecture by Dr Lewis Dartnell. He is a UK Space Agency research fellow working in the field of astrobiology and on the search for microbial life on Mars. This presentation, however, was on *The Knowledge: How to Rebuild the World from Scratch*. His book of the same name has been on the Sunday Times bestseller list and explains the fundamentals of how our world works and is the ultimate DIY guide to rebooting human civilization. The presentation was an illuminating history of technological development, delivered in a very entertaining and accessible way. If you are interested it is well worth visiting his website at <http://the-knowledge.org>

Next on the agenda was the AGM. We voted for new principal officers and listened to reports. It was most interesting to find out more about our organization and put faces to names! At the final afternoon session, retiring chairman Barbara Lewis made her farewell speech and presented us all with A Round Tuit – so now we have no excuse, but must get on and do all we can to promote the U3A!