



Chat from the chair

Hoping to meet again soon

Hello and welcome to the May edition of our fabulous Newsletter! I do hope all our members are keeping well and I imagine the majority of you have had your second Covid vaccination by now.

Even after having that second jab, and in light of recent easing of lockdown restriction measures, it is still important for us all to be vigilant.

I would like to say a huge "thank you" to all those members who take the time to reply to my emails, your kindness is very much appreciated. In fact, one recent, amusing and news filled email from a member got me

thinking just how important communication really is.

The most effective communication goes in more than one direction and I feel that it is important for us all to keep in touch with one another by whatever means we can. Of course, it's not really possible, or safe, just now to drop in on a friend for a cuppa and a chat but we can all pick up the phone. If you haven't heard from a friend or fellow u3a member for some time, do pick up the telephone and give them a call, it might just make their day.

We are still looking to recruit

Committee members to fill positions that will become vacant this June; any member can join the Committee however short or long their involvement with u3a might be. The roles are neither difficult nor arduous so please consider how you might be able to ensure the continuation of your u3a by being a Committee member.

Finally, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all our new members, I hope it is not too long before we can all meet up, rekindle old friendships and start making new ones.

Linda Shutt

Sign up now for 1st Book Group by Zoom

The Book Group will host a Zoom meeting on Monday 10 May 2021 at 10.30am.

If you love to read and would like to chat about the books you have read during lockdown then join us in this first Zoom Book Group session. Email me at: annstanford1@sky.com and I will forward the link.

Ann Stanford



Brighten up your day

Question: What's the connection between wood carving in limewood, Egyptian goddesses, simple maths calculations, the London Coliseum and the origin of the term Red Letter Days?

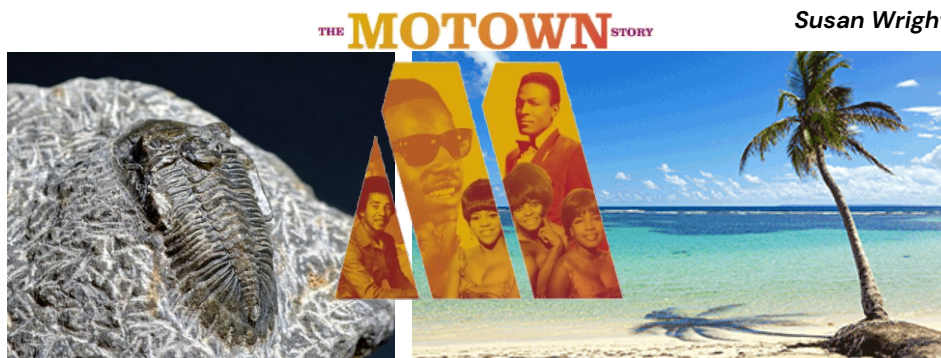
Answer: These are just some of the topics and content I've enjoyed through the u3a on-line learning link at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning>

As I've always enjoyed 'finding out' and experiencing those: "Well I didn't know that" moments, the online learning platform has been great to dip into. It was easy to use too. Many of the lectures were delivered by experts from leading national organisations such as the British Library or the V&A museum; others were hosted by knowledgeable u3a members mainly via a Zoom link. Each one was superbly illustrated by either film or top-quality photographs that really enhanced the presentation.

What a worthwhile way to spend just an hour but to brighten up your whole day.

Yet, I'm left with a dilemma. Should I sign up for the Caribbean Murder Mystery or The Story of Motown, or Wicked Plants or Palaeozoic Geology next?

Susan Wright



Walking groups to resume activities

The executive committee has recently given approval for walking groups to resume their activities, subject to them observing detailed national u3a guidelines so every walk is Covid-19 compliant and as a result not subject to the "rule of six". So far the rambling and strolling groups have announced they will resume their activities.

Rambling group

The rambling group undertakes walks of between 7 and 9 miles, generally in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and South Yorkshire. Being cautious about car sharing, we are currently concentrating on walks with not too far to drive to the start. We meet on the first and third Wednesdays each month. Experienced walk leaders recce every route beforehand to identify potential problems and to ensure we don't get lost! We like to finish our walks with a drink in a café or pub, subject to Covid-19 restrictions of course.

Our next walk on Wednesday 19 May is 8.5 miles in length taking in Lea gardens, the Cromford Canal, Crich memorial and Lea village. If you're interested in joining this or any of our

future walks, please phone Andy Riby on 07833 543705 or email ribya@imcgroup.co.uk.

Strolling group

The strolling group's first outing will be on Friday 18 June. Details of the walk have yet to be confirmed. Strollers meet the 3rd Friday of the month, walk at our own pace and cover approximately two miles at the most.

We stay local e.g. The Reservoir/ Rufford Country Park/Vicar Water and more and aim to have coffee/tea and sometimes a bacon sandwich or scone, depending where we are, at the end. If you are interested in taking part, please phone Denise Doud on 01623 619856 or email dmdoud52@gmail.com.

Andy Riby



Members of the strollers group take advantage of recent lockdown relaxations



Thank you Kelvin

On behalf of myself and lots of other members, I would like to say a huge thank you to Kelvin Foster our welfare officer at Forest Town u3a. For the past year Kelvin has supported confidentially many members, keeping in touch weekly and all on a voluntary basis. At the beginning of lockdown he supported me personally. Recently I needed to call on him for a personal friend and u3a member who really needed the support. We at Forest Town are very lucky to have Kelvin.

Denise Whitsed

Great British Spring Clean

If like me you've spent many hours over the past year walking the Nottinghamshire countryside you will have seen, at first hand, the appalling amount of rubbish littering the lanes and footpaths of our county.

The good news is that from 28 May through to 13 June the Keep Britain Tidy Group is organising a Great British Spring Clean to try to do something about what is now a major problem.

Forest Town u3a member, Jane Freeman tells me that local Rotary Clubs are getting behind the initiative. She spotted a lady wielding a litter picker and rubbish bag and discovered that if she got in touch with Mansfield Rotary Club's Stewart Rickersey (stewart@news-journal.co.uk), he would deliver a litter picker to her so Jane's now fully equipped. If you want to get a litter picker and join the clean-up team then do get in touch with Stewart.



If you come across any large fly-tipping sites then please email Jo Waldron, Parks & Street Cleansing Manager jwaldron@mansfield.gov.uk with location details and ideally photographic evidence.

Helen Riby, Editor

What to do in lockdown?

My hobbies/interests:

- Roadside postboxes, photographing and recording different types and locations.
Not able to do this during lockdown.
- Helping in the garden.
Able to do this if required and the weather is suitable.
- Family video editing and recording onto DVD.
This is a possibility apart from having problems understanding the new editing program, does anyone else have this problem?
- Further delving into my family history.
This seemed to fit the bill as there is always more to do, the further you go back the more questions



there are to solve.

So, family history it was.

Having researched into family history for over 40 years my files needed to be tidied up and put into a better order and there needed to be better coordination between my paper copies and my computer program.

A wider approach

The thought of just tidying files was pretty boring, so I decided, as it was FAMILY history that I would also spread my research to the siblings and children of my direct ancestors.

Why this approach when it is the usual guidance to newcomers to stick with following the male line of the surname that you are interested in?

Well, there are no real rules in family history and I have always followed the lines that were the most easily researched at that time.

Hence, I have gone further back on my Great Grandmother's surname as they remained in the small village of Greasbrough that I grew up in, whereas my Marples ancestors were always on the move; more recently in Rotherham and Sheffield in Yorkshire, then, as I went further back, it was Chesterfield and Baslow in Derbyshire.

My thoughts were that my ancestral families would not only show me 'who I am' but also 'Why I am like I am'. There is also some reassurance (or not) as one of the family history



historians sayings is: "Your father is your father because your mother says so".

As you work back the siblings of one generation become the children of the previous generation and as well as looking like my father I was always told I looked like one of my mother's brothers. Like everyone else I am a mixture of genes.

Skeletons aplenty

If you are interested in jigsaws or detective stories then family history can be a fascinating hobby, but if you are afraid of skeletons in the cupboard, keep clear as all families seem to have a least one.

Most family historians, including myself take the view that it is the skeleton that makes the hobby interesting. **Malcolm Marples**

Back to Thursford

As reported in the last issue, the Thursford mini-break is back for 2021 and there are still places to be had. The break will take place 16 to 18 November on a half board basis at Hotel Caley Hall, Hunstanton, Norfolk. The price is to be confirmed but will be around £285.

Day 1: Travel to Thursford arriving around midday, optional lunch and extravaganza show at 14.00. Travel onto hotel for inclusive evening meal.

Day 2: Visit to Norwich. **Day 3:** Return via Holt

To book, please phone Denise Whitsed for room availability on 07791 941502. When places are confirmed send a £50 deposit CHEQUE PAYABLE TO SKILLS HOLIDAYS* to Denise Whitsed 28, Farmcroft Road Mansfield Woodhouse NG19 8QT. In addition to your



cheque please state your name, who you are sharing with, your telephone number, email address and membership number. Please note Denise is available Mon to Fri 09.00 to 16.00.

* Whilst this is a u3a holiday it is booked direct with Skills. Once booked monies are non-refundable unless a replacement can be found.

Denise Whitsed

Diary of a (semi) lockdown kid part 9

Greetings one and all,

I trust you haven't been too much 'on the rampage' after the partial un-lockdown granted to us by Our Beloved Leader? It's rather akin to the release of cows from their winter quarters – madly galloping and kicking up their heels in joy and ecstasy on seeing the sun and green grass, but we do need to be careful not to tread in any cowpats on the way out!

I found that I have developed mystical powers of prediction during this enforced incarceration – viz:

1. If windows have just been cleaned:

- a) It **will** rain the next day, but only after;
- b) Pigeons have created 'angel wing' patterns on the glass, having crashed into the sparkling panes and;
- c) Other birds have discovered the newly-cleaned glass is a suitable target for bashing their beaks against after honing their skills on the mirrors dotted round the garden (see previous edition for details!)

2. Bonfires will be lit on sunny days when:

- a) Washing has been pegged out;
- b) Windows and doors are open to let in the lovely fresh air.

3. Ditto a) and b) when Lavender Joe makes his first appearance of the year.

Hedgehogs out of hibernation

Spring must now be here (ignoring the clocks-moving forward trick, I trust they did all go Forward in all your households?) because the hedgehogs are out of hibernation! Four at the last count on the webcam, plus the various birds who make very early morning appearances and a few cats who have developed a penchant for hedgehog food and a skill in deftly swiping it out of the previously well-out-of-paw reach bowl. Must make a few adjustments to that.

Hoppy, the three-legged hog hasn't reappeared, but three others (two of whom may be some of the ones overwintering in the two 'des reses' provided) and another interloper have. I have developed a knack of identifying them on the black and white videos based on a few odd splodges on their spines.



Other signs of spring cleaning have been noted along the drive. At one of the nearby neighbour's, an early morning flurry of activity was seen, coinciding with the Un-lockdown Date. It comprised the arrival of a grey van which disgorged a couple of gardeners who began zooming (No, not That Zooming!) up and down the lawns, followed closely by a light blue van containing the window cleaner (the variety that employs a brush on a pole; I am not entirely convinced they get into all the nooks and crannies using that method.)

After a short break, a dark blue van with *Oven Cleaning Services* emblazoned on the side swooped up the drive, so I leave it to your imagination as to what job they were tasked with.

Was a Royal personage coming incognito? It turns out a visitor was expected, who duly turned up in the afternoon, to 'partake of tea on the terrace.' I **do** hope all the sterling efforts of the morning's activities were duly noted and appreciated, although I cannot imagine the oven was inspected!

Car insurance woes

Anyone had to change/renew/cancel car insurance?

A letter appeared on the mat last week containing the expected car renew policy with a **hefty increase** in the annual fee. This invoked a sharp intake of breath and a few choice words and a scurry to T'internet for a trawl among the comparison sites. Luckily, 'im indoors' had recently renewed his policy with another provider with a very good deal, so I decided to do the same.

No problems until I realised I needed to contact my current provider to cancel 'officially'. Thought I would take the quick route of a few clicks with the online Chat Bot, following the links in the letter. But, would it allow me to select from an existing list the topic to be discussed? I leave all you good readers to reach your own conclusions. I chose the 'least-worst' option, to be given the equivalent of the robotic run-around. Basically, after waiting 10 minutes in a virtual queue, I was informed I was in the wrong section. When I asked if I could be transferred, it was beyond its capabilities and I was required to get to the back of another queue. Panic began to set in as I looked at the clock, realising it was getting perilously near to PopMaster time.

I didn't want to lose my place, so it was a case of multi multi tasking: laptop balanced on kitchen worktop, with one eye on the queue, numbers, kettle on, mugs and teapot at the ready, crumpets in toaster, timer on, radio on and plates and knives awaiting their allotted tasks.

I was saved by 'im indoors' actually returning indoors from the shed to take over kitchen duties, whilst I got in position on the sofa for the Big Quiz, still in the queue. I ended up still multi-tasking, as I had finally reached the top of the list, so ended up 'talking' to the Chat Bot, answering the quiz questions and drinking tea whilst trying not to get too many buttery fingermarks on the keyboard.

It turned out, the company

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The phantom diarist (tales from semi-lockdown)

Avian Activities:

Stood transfixed as a flock of geese flew over my garden, honking and trumpeting. About 50 in chevron formation, heading north. Stunning. I wonder where they were off to?

Watched from the window as a great tit/coal tit (not sure) collected a large amount of sheep's wool, placed amongst a climbing plant for nesting purposes. Its mate was waiting nearby.



© Aviceda



© Francis C. Franklin

Left a coal tit, smaller and without the yellowy/green hue of the great tit, right

Looking up:

Didn't see the Super Worm Moon on the appointed evening as it was too cloudy. But two nights before, a beautiful bright, almost full, moon could be seen. Quite a sight. A Super Moon is the full moon at its closest to earth (the perigee), when it appears bigger and brighter. The full moon that is known as a 'worm moon' gets its name from the emergence of earthworms as the ground thaws in

March; the start of spring!

Bin and gone:

A windy night when the green bins stood in the road, waiting for collection. Mine had in it one small black

refuse bag, tied tightly. Went to bring the bin in after a morning involved in important online family business. Said bin had toppled sideways, courtesy of the strong winds, but was partially supported by a small shrub. IT HAD NOT BEEN EMPTIED! No doubt there is some daft Elf 'n' Safety ruling that says the 'operator' must not pick up a fallen bin in case of back injury. I despair. On the subject of bins, the new glass recycling bin turned up unannounced. Problem: where to keep it! Managed to squeeze it in between some pots in the back garden – bit of an eyesore, but hey...! A welcome addition.

Music:

Over Easter, I thoroughly enjoyed BBC2's broadcast of Handel's Messiah (English National Opera) from the London Coliseum. Glorious!

...diary of a (semi) lockdown kid *continued*

was doing its D@^\$£ to prevent me from defecting to a rival company and it took a further 20 minutes with a lot more Q&As for them to concede I really had got a better deal elsewhere. Phew.

Popmaster performance

And I did rather well on the quiz, I have to say, despite all the distractions, but I have yet to reach the magic 39 points. When I have at least 3 days with maximum scores, I may 'bite the bullet' and apply to be on the programme, but don't hold your breath!

Now a complete change of topic. How are your bathroom cabinets organised?

Pristine, neat and tidy, with the minimum of toiletries, first aid necessities and medicines all arranged in logical order? Or, like mine, so full of lots of half-empty bottles of shampoo, sprays, mousses, conditioners, (all required, depending on how much of a 'bad hair day' I am having) that it is crucial to get the door closed very slowly and carefully each time, taking great care not to unbalance any of them?

Thought so.

Well, maybe you have experienced the TCP catastrophe? You know, that well known go-to dark brown glass bottle that ought to have been safely at the back of the cupboard, but for some reason wasn't?



A few days ago, there was a resounding crash that emanated from aforesaid cupboard, as the precariously-placed bottle had objected to the back door slamming violently after a gust of wind caught it.

Finding the bottle and half of its contents all over the floor was bad enough, but, after the clear-up, it was discovered that the plastic lid had cracked and wouldn't be coerced back on.

Cling film was employed – with me foolishly imagining it was going to prevent the distinctive aroma pervading the house – how wrong was I!

I now have to choose between putting the offending bottle in the garage and trust any emergency that needs its use can wait for it to be retrieved in time, or putting up with the new 'air freshener perfume' whilst at the same time hoping that any visitor (I live in hope for that day) won't actually notice!

On that note I will away to put the bird table back in the upright position for the second time today, thanks to the attentions of Magic Mabel, the Terrible Tabby.



AnonyMouse

A funny thing happened...

Hi Everyone,

Have you been taking advantage of the easing of lockdown, if so, what have you done?

I haven't gone mad and I certainly haven't joined the queues to get into various shops, but I have had a trip to the library. It was costing me a small fortune buying books to keep me going, so I was relieved to be able to stock up on new material from a source where I can satisfy my appetite for reading for free.

The other 'biggie' for me has been a haircut! I was so pleased to finally get it tamed as it's been over four months since it was last done.

It was nice to have the usual banter with both the hairdressers and other customers, although the topics have changed somewhat.

Have you had your jab yet?

Usually the main one, as anyone who goes regularly to the hairdresser will know, centres around holidays, not now, it's have you had your jab yet, which one did you get and did you have any side effects? Ah how times have changed.

I did hear of one woman who, when asked what she was looking forward to, replied, buying new pants and getting a haircut. As she said, we were all starting to look and feel like covid tramps. I think that sums it up pretty well.

The weather's finally been kinder to us as well, with warmer sunny days of late, so no excuse for not getting out for that walk or doing a bit in the

garden; both of which I've been doing.

It's been lovely to see the Wood Anemones carpeting Oak Wood at Vicar Water, playing Spot the Frog in the stream and watching the tiny ducklings whizz around like little clockwork toys with harassed mum in hot pursuit, although I was slightly bemused when I went just before Easter and saw the Easter Bunny strolling along in company with the Mad Hatter. I kid you not, and before anyone asks, no, I hadn't been at the cooking sherry beforehand!

Impossible instructions

Is it just me, or does anyone else find that instructions that accompany a new appliance seem to be very vague these days? I recently purchased a new mower, there was actually nothing wrong with my old one until I accidentally severed the cable, thank goodness for automatic cut outs, otherwise I'd now be Glow in the Dark Jen! As it was ten years old though I decided it would probably be more economical to buy a new one rather than pay to have the cable replaced.

New mower duly purchased I read the assembly instructions, (honestly!) which seemed to consist of little else apart from vague diagrams. Nevertheless I set to. First part of handles were fitted ok but then it all went wrong. After several minutes working out which way up the second part of the handles should be attached and then trying to hold them in position long enough to get the wing nuts on I found out what that bit of curved plastic was for. It holds the cable along the handle, so it was wing nut on that side off to put plastic in place.

Finally all done! I stepped back to admire my

handiwork, glanced at the box and realised the top part of the handle was on upside down, so off it all had to come again.

The last bit, but where are the back wheels? Oh, they're in the 'cat box', Lockdown Kid, take note; there is more than one use for the grass collection box, if you want to sort your moggies out!

The instructions said the wheels were 'click, lock', push on until they click into place, no problem, easy peasy, all done, let's take it for a spin. One wheel fell off, and then the other. I'd obviously not pushed hard enough.

Brute force and ignorance

By this time I was losing patience and the air was turning blue in the garage. I tipped the mower onto its side, put the wheel in position and – blow the 'push' – gave it a whack. Turn, tip, repeat with second wheel and hey presto, all ready to go, finally! Who says brute force and ignorance doesn't work?

Finally, a quick update on the saga of the heat and smoke detectors. My uncle burnt a quiche in the microwave the other day, it was meant to be warming through and ended up cremated. While he was attempting to waft the smoke out of the bungalow the lifeline kicked into action with an enquiry as to whether he was ok.

'Yes' he replied, 'Just burnt my lunch'. The next thing he knew a fire engine screeched to a halt outside and several firemen jumped out to 'rescue' him. Result, a bit of excitement to liven up the afternoon for the neighbours, plus a very red-faced uncle. At least we know the system is working, but not too often I hope.

Jenny Wright



Walking in the footsteps of soldiers

I wonder how many people realise, as they walk or drive along the road opposite the White Gates Public House (Clipstone Drive), that it is so full of history? Maps in the mid-1800s show it as a road leading to the Duke of Portland's Cavendish Lodge and Clipstone (now known as Kings Clipstone). The road was often referred to as the Straight Mile as it was where early motor enthusiasts met and raced their automobiles at a time when all around was open countryside.

In 1915, just after the First World War broke out, the road would have been used by early lorries, horses and carts carrying equipment to the area. This was to erect hundreds of huts that would house well over 30,000 soldiers over the next few years. On the right-hand side of the road (heading towards Clipstone) and just past what became Newlands Drive, is where just some of the parade grounds and huts were. Well down on the left a Military Hospital was built.

Over the next five years the soldiers would have paraded up and down Clipstone Drive on route marches. In off

duty periods they would have also walked or driven (some had bicycle, cars, and motor bikes). The dust from the unmade road would have flown into the air and the noise is not hard to imagine.

In 1921 the camp was closed and the huts and all equipment sold. Some speed trials took place on the road again for another two or three years. Over the years since then council houses, private houses, schools etc. have been built where the huddled Clipstone Camp once stood. The Military Hospital was demolished and became overgrown with trees which, recently, have been cleared by Forestry England. Space does not allow for the last 100 years of this history to be told.

It is sufficient to say the Clipstone Drive today just past Newlands Drive, provides leisure facilities for people who are walking, cycling, jogging or horse riding. There are many aspects of nature, trees, birds etc. and views to enjoy, but how many people realise they are walking in the footsteps of soldiers?

Pauline Marples



Wanted: Assistant Group Coordinator

Could you be our next Assistant Group Coordinator? Steve Evans, who is stepping down from the role at the AGM, explains what's involved:

- 1 To deputise for Groups' Coordinator;
- 2 To keep the spreadsheet containing groups and contact details up to date and provide both the newsletter editor and the website editor with any updates. Ensure the membership secretary has up to date information on the groups available at general meetings for visitors and/or new members;
- 3 Prepare laminated A5 posters for each group to display on the group noticeboard at meetings;
- 4 Attend committee meeting once a month;
- 5 Attend Group Leaders' meeting twice a year & take minutes;
- 6 Respond to enquiries about groups from website or by other means.

AGM 2021 reminder

The Forest town u3a Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held on 3 June 2021. Minutes from last year's AGM and the Agenda for this year will be sent out via email very soon, along with the Treasurer's Report and the Chair's Report.

Any member who wishes to have a paper copy of these documents should contact Andy Riby 01623 656958 for the Treasurer's Report and Sue Harkin on 01623 479110 for all other reports.

A tribute to Chris Robb - a musician to the end

Dear members and supporters of our 1960's music group,

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our friend and bass player Chris Robb who sadly passed away last month.

His passing was a huge shock to us all especially as he had been showing signs of improvement in his year-long battle against cancer, a cruel and indiscriminate illness.

Chris was one of the original members of our group and played a huge part in its success. When we first started the group consisted of

Chris, myself and Keith, who also is sadly no longer with us.

We began in the small Sherwood room at the far end of the Arena. As the months passed we out-grew the room and in October 2018 were able to transfer to the Arena lounge, which was just about perfect.

It was about this time that two new members joined and just prior to the covid pandemic, our monthly gatherings had been in the region of 40 to 50 members.

Chris was a lovely man to know, generous with his time for both our group and several others groups he was interested in. His enthusiasm and knowledge of all genres of music was massive and a lot of his time was spent listening to, talking

about and playing music.

He was a fan of the guitar as a musical instrument and as a piece of art and was the proud owner of a collection at home.

As a school teacher he was known to take a guitar to work to use as a teaching aid.

Even though he had a life long love of the guitar he never had the opportunity to play in a group and I am proud to say that I have been able to play a small part in fulfilling that long held ambition. So, on behalf of our group (Now or Never) that's Win, Irene, Bob and myself: Rest in Peace. Chris Robb, Musician and Friend.

John Kirk



Now or Never – from left Chris, Win, John, Irene and Bob

Your Executive Committee contacts

Forest Town & District U3A couldn't run without the hard work of its Executive Committee. Everyone gives their time freely. Welfare Officer, **Kelvin Foster**, has been keeping in touch by email but for members who do not use email he's keen to emphasise that any member who needs help should contact him by phone on **01623 422251**. All Executive Committee members can be contacted via the website at <https://u3asites.org.uk/forest-town/contact>

Current members are: Linda Shutt (Chair), Allan Barham (Vice-Chair), Andrew Riby (Treasurer), Irene Duncan (Assistant Treasurer) Sue Harkin (Business Secretary), Anita Adlard (Groups' Coordinator), Steve Evans (Assistant Groups' Coordinator), Kelvin Foster (Membership Secretary & Welfare Officer), Kathryn Cope (Assistant Membership Secretary & Speaker Seeker) and Bob Hunt (Website Editor).

Next issue

Please send articles or ideas for the next issue to Helen Riby by email ftu3anews@gmail.com or by post to: 5 Fal Paddock, Mansfield Woodhouse NG19 9RW **by midnight on Friday 21 May.**

Please visit our website for the latest news:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/forest-town/>

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