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December 2023 / January 2024

Chairman's Message

Not optimistic but hopeful.

Everyone in the car was longing to see the big mountain. They'd read about it, they'd seen pictures, but they wanted to experience it for themselves. The roads through the foothills were winding and crowded with cars. The big mountain was a great attraction. But would it really meet their expectations? Suddenly, rounding a bend, they caught a glimpse of the big mountain ahead of them, and it really was wonderful to behold. And then within a few seconds they were round the next bend and the big mountain disappeared from sight. They'd all been optimistic that the journey would be worthwhile, but now, even though they could no longer see the big mountain, they could truly hope that their dreams would be fulfilled.

The daily news prevents us from being optimistic about what 2024 will bring. Wars near and far, political systems that seem to be breaking down, threats of new pandemics, and a climate that is quickly becoming out of control, would all lead us to become pessimists.

Many of our u3a groups are people almost randomly thrown together by a specific common interest. What I find remarkable is how quickly those groups of people start to care about each other, and go out of their way to help one another. It is easy to dwell on the less attractive side of human behaviour, but the organisation to which we all belong frequently demonstrates the better side of human nature. And it is in exercising that better side, the care and concern for one another, that we can build a sense of hope for the future.

As we celebrate the feast of Christmas and the passing of another year, I think as an organisation we can truly look forward with hope to a fulfilling 2024.

A merry Christmas and a happy New Year, Steve Potts

Beat the Scammers – Let's not "spoil" them for Christmas

With the festive season only just round the corner we all become a bit less security conscious as we are busy buying all these lovely presents and goodies for Christmas. Like us, the scammers are also preparing for Christmas. They know that during this season we may use different websites to buy special presents and also that many of us like to make a donation to a good cause. And yes, you know what I am going to say next: "There are many Fake Websites and Fake Appeals for help".

1. Use the retailers you are familiar with. Always log directly into their websites or Apps. Don't use links from other websites.
2. Make any donations to a known charity or appeal. Check the website name when you make a payment. Again don't click on a link from another website or a link shared on social media.

And a final question for us to think about: If our credit cards or debit cards get stolen, do we have enough information on us to put a stop on them ASAP.

Jacob

Membership News

Well, firstly a big thank you to all of you who have taken the trouble to master using our Beacon membership system to amend your personal details and more importantly to renew your membership. This has greatly helped membership administration as we have not had to deal with processing 570 pieces of paper! That, coupled with not having to bank cash or cheques, makes for a much more efficient and secure system.

The requirement to create individual passwords has been problematic but this is a one-off event and most, but not all, have now done this. Access to your own membership record and online renewal in the future depends on a password being set.

In light of your comments and changes that have been implemented, we have honed any instructions we send out and believe we have a robust and reliable process that can be used by all. We just need to convince a few more of you to join in.

The biggest hurdle for online renewal still seems to be the belief that you need a PayPal account. You definitely do not but there is a background PayPal mechanism that Beacon uses to process your bank card transaction. Also, an option to automatically create a PayPal account has been sneaked in that you need to switch off by sliding the little blue dot to the left if you do not wish to do this.

Membership renewal can also be done at the Christmas Party on Tuesday 19th December at the Guildhall. Just bring your Bank Card!

Finally, we would like to welcome the following new members and look forward to seeing them joining groups. They are Althea Wade, Kate Allison, Gordon Eckert, Jackie Bruce, Janet McNeill, Lily Game, Malcolm Cooper, May McDonald, Michael Scrimshaw, Robert Woods, Susan Woods, Wendy Wood, and Yoon Morris

Andrew Weston Grantham U3A Beacon Administrator 07836 250972
Angela Rose Membership Secretary 07966 516529

Pastoral Care

Please let Janet Hine know if you become aware of a member who is ill and would appreciate a message of support, or if a member has died. Her contact details are: **The Old Parsonage, The Drift, Syston, Grantham, NG32 2BY. 01400 250984** care.granthamu3a@gmail.com

Monthly Meetings

Apologies for 2 incorrect dates in the November Newsletter.
The AGM is on Tuesday 20 February, not 14 February.
The February Coffee Morning is therefore on Tuesday 27 February.

Tuesday December 19th 2023 at 2pm: Christmas Party. As in previous years, the Committee have organised a modest festive occasion in the Ballroom of the Guildhall for members, which will feature some nibbles of the mince pie and sausage roll variety, along with tea, coffee and possibly other libations. There will be a Christmas Quiz arranged by Damian McEntegart and some singing of carols and Christmas songs accompanied by the Ukulele group. All Grantham u3a members are welcome!

Tuesday 16th January 2024: Jane Barnes is a popular speaker who has entertained other u3a groups in our region and comes highly recommended. She will regale us with a talk entitled "Tales from a Dairy Farmer's Wife".

Tuesday 20th February 2024: This is the day of our Annual General Meeting, an important day in the calendar of all members, which will take place at 2pm in the Ballroom, and will be followed by some light entertainment.

Coffee Mornings

Coffee Mornings are held in St Wulfram's Church, Grantham, 10.00am - 11.30am on fourth Tuesday of the month and are open to all members.

The next meetings are:

December - No Coffee Morning

Tuesday - 23 January

Tuesday 27 February

Group News

Page Turners

Chris Whitecross

Our Page Turners group had its last meeting for the year and we had a little Christmas cheer afterwards. We have such a lovely group and as you can see from the photo, all entered into the festive season cheer. We would like to wish all u3a members a very happy Christmas and good 2024.



Scottish Dancing

John Aitken

Grantham u3a Scottish Dancers celebrate St Andrew's Day

One of the most important days in any Scot's calendar is St Andrew's Day, 30 November. The Scottish Dancers began their celebrations at their weekly meeting on Tuesday 28 November during which eight of the members made a video of a dance which has just been published. The dance is called Dick Whittington, a 32 bar jig, and the video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/csuoLxohUyI>

Some of the dancers are also members of the Newark Scottish Country Dance Society and celebrated that evening. The u3a group then danced on the Wednesday at Maple Leaf Lodge Care Home where the residents enjoyed clapping their hands and tapping their toes in time with the lively music.



The following day was St Andrew's Day itself and many of us were out again, this time at Royal Windsor Care Home when we were joined by members of the Waltham Scottish Country Dance Group.



The Waltham Group meets on Thursdays so it celebrated at its evening class where many of our own u3a group are also members.

Plans are already in place for the next great Scottish tradition - Burns Day on 25 January!

Quiz Group

Damian McEntegart

The Quiz group had its latest quiz in November at Grantham Squash Club. We broke our record attendance with 42 including the quizmaster. But there is plenty of space for new recruits. Attendees are randomly split into teams so it doesn't matter what your standard of quiz knowledge is. Many people come on their own. The objective is to have a good time, meet people and hopefully learn a little. A small prize is awarded to each member of the winning team.

We normally meet at the Squash Club on Harlaxton Road at 2.00pm on the third Friday of every month. New attendees are very welcome which will enable us to expand the number of teams. Please contact Damian McEntegart for further details (01476 400128/07804 631311 or email damo.56@hotmail.com)

Note. There will be no quiz on the 3rd Friday of December and Damian will instead present a quiz as part of the u3a Christmas Party at 2pm Tuesday 19th December in the Guildhall Ballroom.

Photography

At the November meeting members approved taking our Flickr group Public. The Photography group will retain the right to approve joining the u3a Flickr group, but viewing the photographs posted will be open to all. For those of you interested in seeing the range of photographic talents from this group simply search on Flickr for u3a Grantham, Select Groups and then u3a Grantham Photography.

The photography competition winner for November, on the subject of curves, was Sharon Flaherty with this image of the roof in King Cross Station.



Gardening Group

Caroline Bowman

Burghley, Past, Present and Future

On Friday 26th January 2024 the Gardening Group will hold its annual community lecture in the Guildhall Arts Centre theatre. The lecture will be given by Joe Whitehead, Head Gardener at Burghley House, and will be

entitled “Burghley, Past, Present and Future”. It will begin at 11am and is expected to last for about an hour. Entry is open to everyone, including non-u3a members, and admission is £2, payable on the door. Doors will open at 10.30am.

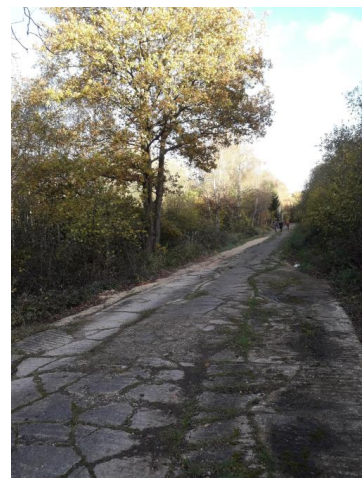
Joe Whitehead is an experienced gardener who comes from a long line of horticulturalists and has worked in a number of well-known English gardens. Although Burghley has 46 acres of gardens, Joe is not daunted by the task of looking after them, but rather sees opportunities to create new and exciting changes, as well as resurrect some old ones.



Wildlife

Kerry Brazil

Our November meeting took us to Morkery Wood, where 12 members had a pleasant walk. As the ground was very wet, we kept to the hard-standing paths. As a consequence we saw very few fungi. The one in the photo is possibly one of the *Lactarius* family. The weather was good and the sunlight highlighted the autumn colours of the remaining leaves on the trees.



Tenpin Bowling Group

Dave Beesley

The Tenpin Bowling Group meets at Grantham Bowl at 11 a.m. on alternate Fridays. We generally play two games, for which Grantham Bowl charges us a reduced rate of £5 per person per game.

If you fancy a bowl and a bit of a friendly chat we look forward to seeing you. Bowlers of any skill level are welcome - just turn up before 11am and you will see the group of users drinking coffee at the table by reception.

The first meeting in the new year is on Friday 5th January. Please contact Dave Beesley on 07946 669639 if you would like any further information.

Beginners' Guitar Group

Fiona Robbins

The last week of November brings St Andrew's day and a time to celebrate all things Scottish, so we duly tried out a few new songs. Some were more challenging than others, but we managed to make a reasonable job of the simpler ones. I'm sure Scotland will forgive us! December naturally calls for seasonal singing so we are now busy practising Christmas tunes to bring the year to a festive close - with a little help from our friends. Our last meeting this year will be party time!

Guitar Group

Graham Welham

The Electric Guitar group continues to have its practice sessions at "The Christian Fellowship" every Thursday afternoon, from 1.30-4.00pm. We still have a couple of vacancies for any guitarists who feels the group might be for them!

In the past 8 weeks, we've played a couple of afternoon session for residents at Maple Leaf Lodge and Richards Care home. Our songs and music seemed to go down well with all.

We've had a kind invite to meet up with the Beginners' Guitar group, run by Fiona Robbins, on Monday 18th Dec. Some of our guitar group have said they'll go along; it should be a good session and we're looking forward to it.

Photographs taken at recent gigs!



We're looking forward to the new year, with one definite booking to play at the u3a Annual General Meeting, in February.

Happy New year to all...

Singing Group

The Singing Group is coming back to life and will meet for the first time on Thursday 4th January 2024 at 10.00am in The Shepherd Room, ChristChurch, Finkin Street. The new musical director will be Ken Dyer. The group will meet on the first and third Thursday of the month.

We will be singing a wide range of music, in parts. Why not join us? You will be very welcome.

John Down 01476 576204 downjs01@gmail.com

Local History

Anne Rudderham

Our planning meeting in November saw members put together a draft programme for 2024 and speakers/visits are now being finalised and it is hoped to issue next year's full programme soon.

We start on **Weds, 10th January** with a return visit from Colin Deeley from the National Trust, this time talking about Belton House. The meeting **starts at 2pm in Grantham Museum** and **all u3a members are invited to attend**. To reserve a place, please contact Anne Rudderham on annerudderham23@gmail.com or by leaving a message on 07754 702919. Pay on the door fee to cover venue/speaker costs will be around £3pp (exact money would be helpful please, thank you).

Thank you to all contributors this month. Please send your contributions for the February newsletter to ed.granthamu3a@gmail.com by Friday 10 February.