

MARCH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

ANNUAL REPORTS

APRIL 2017 – MARCH 2018



LOTTERY FUNDED

The Object of March U3A is :

To advance education and in particular the education of people not in full time gainful employment who are in their Third Age residing in March and its surrounding locality.

The Third Age is defined as the period of time after the first age of childhood dependence and the second age of full time employment and/or parental responsibility.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

As always the year started off with our Annual General Meeting at which, under the terms of our new Constitution, all Committee members had to be elected for a one year term. The position of Chairman was contested by Dorothy Hughes and myself, there was no nomination for Vice Chairman and we ended with one member short. Jen Boxall, the retiring Chairman, Kathy Crowther and Brenda Wyatt all retired with heartfelt thanks for their respective contributions over the years. Alan Ward, Trudi Davies and Marion George were elected for the first time. Subsequently, in June, Keith Jolly was co-opted and Alan Ward assumed the positions of Vice Chairman and Groups' Co-ordinator. The Committee was thus complete.

On May 10th, after a protracted application process undertaken by the previous Committee, March U3A became 'Registered Charity No. 1172951' under the auspices of the Charity Commission. This was a necessary process due to our increased income caused by rising membership numbers over the years.

Due to this increasing income the need arose to think about controlling our capital to a sensible level. After much discussion the Committee proposed a decrease in the membership fee. The reduction to £15 a head, from April 1st 2018, was approved by the membership at a Special General Meeting in November. We continue to offer financial support to Groups where needed and have granted a total of around £500 for various reasons.

March U3A continues to participate in Regional events there having been 3 Network meetings in June, October and February. There was also a Regional quiz contest hosted by Whittlesey U3A in which our team came a close second. Quizzes were also organised by Maureen Malvern and Mike Robinson who aim to hold four per year in the library. The events were all successful and seem to be increasing in popularity.

The monthly meetings continue to be well supported with around 100 members attending. The speakers have been varied and interesting, some more than others, thanks to the sterling work of David Rapetti, our Speaker Organiser. As much as he likes the task he does feel that, after 3 years, he deserves a rest and would like somebody to take over from him. Any volunteers? The August meeting was a special one which gave all Groups the opportunity to display and advertise their activities. Overseen by Alan Ward the event was very successful.

The administration system that we adopted in 2016, U3A Beacon, has proved to be challenging particularly in the financial area. As with so many IT projects it has had teething problems. This was highlighted at the Beacon Conference held in June in Birmingham which I attended. However, we are persevering and are actually finding great benefit in the system thanks to the efforts of Dave Walton, the system administrator.

On the lighter side the social calendar continued to be successful. Boosted by the success of the 2016 Ceilidh, Sharon Smith and Kathy Crowther organised a concert by the City of Peterborough Concert Band in October which was thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. They followed this up with another Ceilidh, on February 24th, at the United Services Club, which was thoroughly enjoyed by about 80 people. A coach trip to Bury St. Edmunds Christmas Fayre was successfully run by Dave Walton in November. The Christmas meeting was very enjoyable, ably organised by Pauline Horton and her gang of helpers. Christine Head once again arranged the Christmas lunch at The Oliver Cromwell Hotel. Both these events were partly subsidised by the Social fund which is boosted by the profits of the regular raffles which were run by Marion George and Paula Washington.

Once again March U3A produced a decorated tree for the St. Peter's Church Christmas Tree Festival. In the public vote for 'Best Adult Tree' our entry won **1st prize**. Congratulations to all members of the Craft Group for all their skill and expertise in making all the decorations and dressing the tree.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (Contd.)

Membership currently stands at 278, an increase of just 19 despite having enrolled an extra 39 since last April. As they say, you win some and you lose some. Thankfully, only two of our members passed away - Margot Beadle in September and Jean Biggs in December.

I have named and thanked a few members already but it would be difficult to name everyone that helps March U3A continue to function. Without you (and you know who you are) we wouldn't survive. Thanks go to you all and I hope you continue to support the new Committee as you have this one. However, I have to single out one person for a special mention and that is our Secretary, Julia Lewis. She has had a very difficult year but has steadfastly continued to carry on with her role and has given me great support. Thanks Julia.

Talking of the new Committee, this report has been prepared for the AGM on 11th April at which a new Committee will be formed. I regret to inform you that I will not be standing for re-election or for a Committee position. I would like to thank all of you that have supported me in my various roles over the last 6 years and wish the new Chairman, whoever it is, every success.

Colin Head, Chairman, March U3A

TREASURER'S REPORT

Even though we have taken action to reduce our bank balance the total balance will be approximately £7400 The breakdown of this is:-

Current account £3625

Social Account £760

Deposit account £3028

Looking back to when I first took over as Treasurer in April 2015, the main account was £2699.96, the Deposit account being £2026.08 and the Group account £2016.08. Together with petty cash the total balance was £7527.10' This means that in three years, despite reducing monthly meeting fees to 50p and paying for the U3A magazine, the balance has remained the same. With this in mind it was decided during the year that we would reduce the membership fees by £2 to £15 for the new financial year. This will immediately reduce the balance by approximately £500 pounds per year.

During the year we have supported groups with requests for equipment as follows:-

The Special Quilting group for a new sewing machine, £69.99,

The newly formed Table Tennis group for new tables, £308.46

Short Mat Bowls for new mats, £12.70 plus £70 for a new handle for the mat rolling machine.

Creative Writing Study, £48.00, half the fees for a seminar with the group paying for the rest.

The Bridge group for new cards, etc., £22.94.

With regards to Group support it is hoped that the new Committee will continue to look at supporting groups in each individual case.

We also have to bear in mind the possible increase in fees for the FE Centre hall hire and, due to the increased membership, we may eventually need to look into the hire of a new venue for the monthly meetings. The Hall fees have not been increased for a long time - at present we pay £920 per year. Due to the increased membership we hire Room 6 as well as the Main Hall to try to avoid congestion when signing in for the monthly meeting.

Capitation Fees to the Third Age Trust is based on the number of members we have and £3.50 comes out of each membership fee.

Thanks to David Rapetti, we have had a variety of speakers over the past year which have cost £805. Our money taken for the monthly meeting equates to an average of 110 people per meeting. We also now have to pay for the Beacon system which this year cost £129.50.

One change for next year is that the social account has to be within the main account. This is not a March U3A decision; it is a directive by the Charity Commission and The Third Age Trust.

The social account has a healthy balance of £760. This account is mainly for the Christmas party. Funds are raised through the raffles held throughout the year.

Finally can I say a huge thank for Joan Perring for helping at the monthly meeting and banking the monies taken in on the day. I know from experience that banking the money can very time consuming.

Pauline Horton, Treasurer, March U3A

BEACON ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM.

The Beacon system is an online system and is our way of keeping membership records, group records and financial accounts under one roof. The system is secure and updated at the end of each day so the risk of losing any information is minimised.

The keeping of U3A information in one place, is I think, a little better than having all the various parts - membership, finance, etc. in peoples' individual computers.

The persons allowed to use the system are the officers, committee members and group leaders. Each person has password access and is allowed to use the system for what they require or are allowed to do. This can be customised for each individual, so some have access to parts such as gift aid, which others cannot access. If those of you who are group leaders think you would benefit from additional access please discuss this with me and, with permission from the committee, we can perhaps arrange this.

Membership renewals are due on the first of April; the system allows renewals from 4 weeks before this date. When the Membership Secretary enters a renewal the financial ledger is automatically updated. This cuts down the work for the Treasurer, although the monies still need to be banked.

Personal information is updated when membership is paid and is logged in each personal membership record. These details are sent when renewal is requested and gives the opportunity to change or delete any personal information, i.e. address, email address, phone number, emergency contact details. This can be done at any time a change occurs if you contact us. The preferred way of contact is email with nearly 250 of our 278 membership having email addresses. The Beacon mass email system is a real success, as it allows all members to be contacted individually or all at once, with personalised emails, using either your familiar name or forename, individual addresses, etc. Attachments and links can also be included and all messages are sent to recipients individually so no one can see who else the message was sent to. Group leaders can email their members in their own group and other group leaders by emailing their groups. This has proved really useful.

Beacon is constantly being improved, with some bugs being sorted out, but with well over a 100 U3A's using the system it's proving it's worth.

If you wish to know more, contact me and I will do the best I can to give you more information about the Beacon System.

Dave Walton, Data Administrator

WELFARE

It is just under a year since I took Welfare over from Brenda Wyatt, who held the post for over five years and is a hard act to follow, she was so good.

My aim as Welfare Officer for U3A is to talk and listen to people who are ill, help them if they need it and visit when asked.

Up to date I have sent 15 cards, one condolence with flowers, 15 bunches of flowers, made four home visits and numerous phone calls.

G (Trudi) Davies, Welfare Officer

GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

This year has been an eventful year with groups growing in numbers in most cases and a very active one.

New groups for 2017

We had several new groups start during 2017.

- **Table Tennis.** This has been a favourite and is growing in numbers, with many members regaining their old table tennis skills and enjoying a good social time.
- **Tin Whistle.** A complete hit with about 6 members joining the group and all hoping to learn a new skill. For some the first time ever playing a musical instrument.
- **Classical Music Appreciation:** This group only started up just before the end of the year with a lot of interest. If you would like to know more contact David Boxall.

Annual Information Day

During August we held our annual information day where as many groups as possible set up information stands and had the opportunity to show what they have been doing and to give out information to those interested in possibly joining some of the groups. This was a very enjoyable day and we took over a large part of the FE centre with teas, coffee and cakes being available all afternoon.

The Churches Visiting group

The group had some splendid days out but due to David Boxall stepping down as leader I am not sure if this group will continue. However it has been enjoyed by so many that if we have some volunteers to organise the days out visiting, we may be able to carry on with this group. A magnificent day was held when the group visited Peterborough Cathedral with a very informative talk by the guide on the history of the Cathedral.

Although I am new to this post it may be beneficial in the near future to arrange a Group Leaders' meeting so that we can get updates on what is happening and of any issues that groups may have.

Alan Ward, Groups Co-ordinator

GROUPS ANNUAL REPORTS

All That Jazz

We meet every third Monday in the month at one of the six members' houses between 2 and 4pm. We look at all the various types of Jazz music from Big Bands to smaller groups. We also look at all the various singers from Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra, to Diana Krall and Clare Teal.

We have been out as a group to see live Jazz being performed and I hope to do this more often in the future.

We have had a couple of enquiries to join us and anyone wanting to consider joining us would be very welcome.

Please contact me if you have any problems which may be holding you back from joining us.

Mike Manze, Group Leader

Birdwatching

I am pleased to report that this has been another year of enjoyable birdwatching.

We have visited many of the bird reserves in our area, all of them places we have visited on previous occasions. We didn't try any new destinations this year, but every visit to a reserve is different, as the birds spotted differ according to the time of year and the weather. We never know how successful we will be when we set off in the morning, but it's always enjoyable. Walking and looking at birds and nature in general is very therapeutic.

We have had an increase in membership over the last couple of years and now have more members than at any time since the group started in 2012. We're always ready to welcome anyone who wants to come on a taster.

Margaret Lloyd, Group Leader

Board Games

We have had another very pleasant year of friendly rivalry and banter, with 12 regular members attending our once monthly meetings. There is always room for more members so if anyone is interested in joining us you would be very welcome.

Rummikub is the favourite game of the moment, but there is a good choice of alternative games if you wish to play something else.

Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month starting at 2pm and are held at my home. Contact me for further information if you are interested - Tel. 01354 650033.

Joan Perring, Group Leader

Bookstall

Once again the stall has been well supported and the variety of donations from members has helped to boost sales. There are regulars and browsers and it is good to hear recommendations being exchanged. The funds raised have gone to help with costs in our U3A so I hope members will continue to support this through 2018.

Lynda Andrews

Bridge

The Bridge Group has been running since 2009. Sessions lasting three hours take place on Tuesday afternoons. Knowledge of the game is required though you don't need to be an expert! We are a friendly group but would welcome new members. For more information please contact Noreen - email ndelozey@hotmail.com or Lynda lynrobin1@gmail.com.

Noreen de Lozey, Group Leader

Card Making

We had ten meetings this year where we made either one or more cards, depending upon the design details. In November, instead of our usual meeting, a group of us went to the "Crafting Live" show at Peterborough Arena – we were fortunate in that Christine Clarke acted as driver and her satnav was very effective in getting us to our destination. It was a very interesting day and we enjoyed the experience and decided that if we did it again we would bring our own food and drink so that we did not have to queue. In February, Jackie Browne kindly organised the monthly meeting as I was away visiting relatives.

There are eight members of the group and although we do not have a meeting in December we did meet, just before Christmas, at The Oliver Cromwell Hotel for a cup of coffee and a chat.

Julia Wright, Group Leader

Churches Visiting Group

This group grew to 28 members. We had three outings in 2017 – one to Marshland Churches in Lincolnshire, one to Norfolk churches including the Wiggenhalls and another to Peterborough Cathedral. Some members have been meeting in three groups to view some talks on Cathedrals and Churches Around the World.

I have decided to stop leading this popular group that I have enjoyed for four years but I think they would like to continue. I would be happy to support someone else in planning visits.

David Boxall, Group Leader

Classical Music Appreciation

This is a new group that meets monthly in our home. We started in December with an introductory session in which I played a varied selection of music of my choice. We plan to divide the meeting into two with a refreshment break. In the first half we will watch a DVD about classical music starting with Mahler. In the second half a group member will share music of their own choice.

David Boxall, Group Leader

Classic Film

With 20 names on the Reminder List, groups of from three to ten have viewed a wide variety of films, from black and white Fred and Ginger to the epic violence of Once Upon A Time In The West. Often an old one turns out to be even better than remembered. Rarely do we consider a film over-rated, which must be thanks to our librarians and selectors, Lynda Andrews and Marietta Keenoy.

There are so many good films being made these days that we are probably going to meet twice a month in the future. An interesting discussion was held after a recent showing, as to whether critical judgement about any film or work of art should be altered by moral revulsion at someone's alleged behaviour. The consensus seemed to be that the oeuvre should be separated from the behaviour. Whether we are consistent in our attitude will be tested in our next showing which features that

Classic Film (contd.)

paragon of British, (not to say Victorian) values, Dame Judy Dench, together with Kevin Spacey in Shipping News.

Carol Jones, Group Leader

Computer Clinic

This happy group is run by Lance Woollard and ably assisted by Garry Malvern. They are our resident experts in this field and aim to build-up the IT knowledge and confidence of members. Anyone who can already use a Mouse and Keyboard should benefit from these sessions and anyone from March U3A is welcome on the first and third Thursday of the Month from 10am to 12:30pm at the Braza Club's small function room. The cost is £2 per session.

In addition to Windows Computers the group also covers Android Smart Phones and Tablets and the format is questions and answers in an informal setting.

There is a Laptop, connected to the internet and projected onto a large screen. Where possible we attempt to reproduce any point raised on the large screen before showing possible solutions. It's not just for problems, any question is fair game. Maybe someone wants to know a quicker way of doing something. Maybe they just want to know how something works or why it works in a particular way! for example:-

- "How do I send a copy email to several people at the same time"
- "How do I to speed up my slow running computer"
- "Why does my computer keep asking me whether I want to update it"
- "Can you remind me how to Cut and Paste"
- "How do I get back things I have deleted"
- "How do I get photos from my phone onto the computer"
- "How do I make copies of all my photos"

The regular agenda has two items.

- 1). Members share and demonstrate favourite websites or software.
- 2). Members share IT issues and solutions. Does anyone know...?, well someone else may have the same problem and someone else may know the answer.

Apple computers and phones are not covered, although Apple users may find some benefit from these sessions.

On behalf of Group Leader

Crafts

This year we have continued to meet, make things and chat about everything under the sun. We represented March U3A in the Community Centre's "Elf on a Shelf" photographic series and made decorations for the Christmas Tree Fayre at St. Peter's Church. No branch was bare! We had the honour of gaining the most public votes and were very pleased.

Sadly one of our members, Jean Biggs, has died aged 89 and another has found it impossible to continue due to ill health. It reminds us that the friendships and enjoyment we gain from the group is valuable and, of course, educational.

Lynda Andrews, Group Leader

Creative Writing

The group consists of eight members who meet on the third Wednesday of each month between 2.30 and 4:30pm at my home. There is no fee for being a member, and due to such small numbers I have elected to waive the 50p charge for refreshments.

The format of the Group sees original poems and/or short stories being created. A theme is chosen at one meeting which members write about before the following month's meeting when their creation is read out loud. Members are encouraged to comment on, and positively critique, each others work. Over the last 12 months themes have been based on:-

Food and/or Drink
Murder
Ireland/The Irish
Nature
Addiction
Frivolity
Independence
Strangers
Intuition
Grandma/Grandpa
The Fall
Christmas Meeting with refreshments

Works are archived so that we have a paper trail of achievements at any one time. Members have been offered the opportunity to enter both Short Story and Poetry Competitions locally and further afield.

Members are always encouraged to offer suggestions on how we can improve the Group with different challenges using the written word.

Jill Osler, Group Leader

Crib (Cribbage)

No report submitted

Mike Chapman, Group Leader

Digital Photography

We have 14 members at the start of 2018 and we meet at the F.E Centre on the first Thursday on alternate months.

In 2017 we had five field trips out to the following;

Cambridge City Walk
Linton Zoo
Wimpole House (NT)
Cambridge Botanical Gardens
March for Autumn Colours

David Bowden, Group Leader

Dressmaking

We are now a group of seven and continue to meet twice a month for three hours at my home. It gives the opportunity to spend a concentrated amount of time on a project, although we do have a break for 'tea/coffee and a chat'.

A variety of garments have been made from a coat to a dressing gown, skirts and tops. Hopefully all are gaining in skills and knowledge and are becoming more ambitious in what they wish to make. It does not have to be personal but can be made for someone else.

Ann Bowden, Group Leader

Exploring World Faiths

The group either meets in the Community Centre or goes out on a visit. We have explored Judaism, Buddhism and Islam. We realise we are only touching the surface and have much more to learn. We have visited the Drolma Buddhist Centre and the Faizan E Medina Mosque in Peterborough. In our meetings we watch DVDs, welcome members of different faiths to talk with us and share our own research. We have just started to find out about Hinduism. Natalie Jolly is helping with running the group, including looking after the finances.

Jen Boxall, Group Leader

Family History

No report submitted due to Group Leader's ill health.

Rosemary Lea, Group Leader

Gardening

The Gardening Group which is held at my home, has a total of 16 members who attend on the first Wednesday afternoon of the month from February to the end of the year. We are a very friendly group and swap seeds, plants and tips between us.

Over the last year we have visited various garden centres and had breakfast/lunch there. We had a visit to Upwood Open Gardens in June and finished the year with our Christmas carvery at the Wheel in Wisbech St. Mary. We have also held two meetings at other members' homes and been able to look around their gardens.

We are fortunate to have Delfland Nursery and Megga Plants nearby in Doddington for group members to visit which is helpful for those who do not drive.

I often have members asking to join the group but as I am unable to take any more it would be good for somebody to start another Gardening Group.

Jean Howes, Group Leader

Geography

There are two groups – an afternoon group and an evening group. Both groups meet monthly at our home and watch and discuss DVD courses based on aspects of Geography. The evening group is learning about, 'Geological Wonders' and visiting 'Mediaeval Cities'.

The afternoon group is using a new course called, 'Understanding Cultural and Human Geography' and finding out about the world of 'The Early Explorers'.

David Boxall, Group Leader

Grumpy Old Men

The group continues to meet at the Ship on the fourth Wednesday of each month and the landlord, Paul, continues to provide not only a very sociable and pleasant venue, but also some very good buffet food for free, which always creates a rush from the greedier members of the group. No names mentioned. We do have a whip round for the staff. This is a very successful arrangement as the members have all got to know each other and have become good friends. There is nothing better than walking into a pub and finding people you know to have a drink and a chat with. This is what it's all about, I think.

New members are, of course, always welcome and included as soon as possible. I have always taken this on as it's so important that new members are made to feel good. I am stepping down as Grumpy leader this year but we have a new leader, John Smith, who I know will be brilliant in this role. He will have my full support.

We did not have as many trips out this year as I would have liked, due to health problems and moving house, both of which took up much of my time.

The new year started and, as with last year, it was decided to go Ten Pin Bowling again. This time it was with the 'Sweeties' who challenged us. We had a brilliant time with prizes given to the highest scorers. We ended a nice day with lunch at Wetherspoons.

The trip to East Kirkby in Lincs to see a Large Model Aircraft flying Display, went very well indeed with the weather staying fine for some spectacular flying displays of Model Aircraft. Dozens of Motor Cycles also attended a Rally on that day with a huge range of bikes for us to see.

The Imperial War Museum at Duxford was our trip for the end of May. There were lots attending and it was a lovely fine day to see the Aircraft Museums, This was the day before an air show, so lots of activity going on.

Next a boat trip on the Nene. Two 35ft narrow boats, full of Grumpies, sailed down the river to Whittlesey for lunch at Wetherspoons and back home again. A really good day out with reasonable weather and everyone having a go at driving the boats. Lots of food and beer, must do this trip again.

The biggest and best trip, run by John, was a trip to Lakenheath American Airbase to see the planes, Radar center and Control tower. At the start of our visit we were able to watch no less than 10 fighter planes F15's and 6 F22's take off before we started our visit. The Americans were great once you got through their security and were very hospitable. A brilliant buffet lunch was enjoyed at the Brewers Tap and a super day was had by all.

I'm sure this year 2018 will be as brilliant as last.

Dave Walton, Group Administrator

Health Walks

We meet every Monday morning at the car park behind the Iceland Store. The walk starts at 10 am prompt and lasts for between 45 minutes and 1 hour.

Our routes are around March – e.g. Silt Road, West End and Nene Parade Riversides, plus Barker's Lane and the Prison walk. The route depends on the weather and conditions underfoot. Numbers vary on each walk but are usually between 10 and 16 members. We have 20 members in the group. After the walk we all meet in Wetherspoon's for coffee and a chat.

Some members meet for lunch about Christmas time.

Rose Morrisey, Group Leader

History - Group 1

We have continued watching the 'Great Courses' series of videos on 'A History of England from the Tudors to the Stuarts'. This is a long course of 48 lectures, so it is lasting a long time. We were watching two episodes a month, but have reduced this to one a month as we have also started watching 'Ancient Greek Civilisation' at the same meetings. This is a much shorter course of 12 lectures, so we should finish it within the year.

A second group led by Maureen Malvern is following us with the History of England course, and has taken some of our numbers, so we have a couple of spaces now if there is a need.

Alan Burdass, Group Leader

History - Group 2

History Group 2 started up last summer with seven members and we meet on the last Tuesday of the month at my home watching a DVD currently about the Tudors and the Stuarts. I liaise with Alan Burdass (leader of History Group 1) and get the DVD's through him. I am now down to 6 members but this is more manageable for me.

Maureen Malvern, Group Leader.

Learn a Language Groups

French

We are a small group, meeting in the library, but lively and have improved our language skills with conversation and games to the extent that other library users have recognised that we are speaking French.

We would welcome more members, whatever level of knowledge you have. I certainly felt more confident speaking to people while in France last year. They could tell I was speaking French too!

Lynda Andrews Group Leader

German

No report submitted.

Margaret Cumming, Group Leader

Learn a Language Groups (contd.)

Italian

This group consists of four members, meeting on a fortnightly basis at my house from 7 - 9pm. Attendance up to the end of November was 90%. Meetings have been cancelled until February due to members' health issues.

For two years the group has also attended extra sessions in Wisbech at the home of a Wisbech U3A member who is a native Italian speaker. These meetings have been stopped by mutual agreement as the March group, due to health issues and other commitments, did not feel they could put in the time and effort expected by the Wisbech member.

The March group are continuing to learn sufficient language to 'get by', but still feel that such a group should be led by someone experienced in the language.

John Wyatt, Group Leader

Spanish

The Spanish group has continued to meet once a fortnight on a Wednesday morning in the town library. Currently there are seven members in the group, some of whom have lived in Spain. The emphasis is on conversational Spanish with some grammar included to help improve understanding. The approach is relaxed with no targets, deadlines or pressure. Topics covered are those which would be useful to visitors/tourists to Spain/Latin America e.g. travel, hotels, eating out, shopping, sightseeing etc. We would probably describe ourselves as 'advanced beginners'.

Norman Kay, Group Leader

Turkish

This group has fallen into abeyance and could be listed as a dormant group now unless or until any other members wish to learn.

Heather Ballard, Group Leader

Mah Jong

We have had another busy year playing every Friday, only missing out Christmas and Easter. We have 22 members of which at least 16 play every week. We play in members' houses in and around March.

As the game is difficult to explain, the easiest way of learning is to come along to a quiet game on a different afternoon and watch it being played. If you are interested in doing this please contact me. The games start at 12.30pm in the winter because of the short days and 1.30pm in the summer. The games usually last for three hours stopping halfway for tea and cakes. Some of our hostesses make gorgeous cakes which we all appreciate.

Mahjong is a Chinese game played with tiles with three or four players to a game. I hope this will enlighten you on the game of Mahjong and encourage you to join.

Beryl Walton, Group Leader

Model Making

This group is not currently meeting but if anyone is interested please contact Len Parsons, Tel. 01354 659195 who will be happy to answer any queries.

Rosemary Lea, Group Leader

Petanque

I would like to express my thanks to everyone who played Petanque with us every Thursday at 2.00pm at the Five Alls Pub in Benwick.

We have been extremely lucky with the weather – there must be some truth in the adage 'the sun always shines on the righteous'.

We seem to be attracting a few new members each season which is reassuring for everyone. Our host at the Five Alls, 'Lofty', has left the pub to move onto another project which is a pity as he was amiable, helpful and interesting. Fortunately his business partner and his wife have taken over - there have been noticeable changes to the premises but we are welcome to use the Petanque rinks.

The first game this season will be the first Thursday in April.

During the summer last year we all had a trip to the coast; we played Petanque on the beach to much laughter from a group of small children wondering what a bunch of Grandads and Grandmas were doing on their reserve! We then enjoyed a picnic in the sunshine. Everyone had a good time and agreed this was a "must do" for 2018. Lastly, we held a Christmas dinner for 22 members at the Three Tuns in Doddington which was very enjoyable.

We look forward to enquiries from new and existing U3A members.

Leon Duncan, Group Leader.

Poetry Appreciation

The Group has 8 members (although one member has not attended regularly due to increased health issues) who meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 10.30am. The meetings are held at my home. There remains no charge for refreshments.

Members choose a subject matter for the following month and then source poetry from published poets new and old that fit the subject; although they can be poems written by the members themselves. The group take it in turns to read aloud their poems of choice and comment accordingly if necessary. Subjects have ranged from:

Member written Limericks
Food and/or Drink
Women
Weather
America/Americans

For August's meeting a new format was suggested and adopted. Poets whose surname started with A, B or C D, E or F G, H or I J, K or L M, N or O was used. This proved very popular because the members weren't restricted to a specific subject and learned about many poets they had previously never heard of. It was decided to continue this theme through into 2018 until the alphabet was exhausted.

Poetry Appreciation (contd.)

Throughout the year a few monthly meetings were held at other members homes and it was agreed that in 2018 this would become a more regular occurrence.

We have seen a few new faces coming along for 'taster' sessions during the year and if anyone is interested in possibly joining our group in 2018 then perhaps they would like a 'taster' as well? All they need to do is contact me.

Jill Osler, Group Leader

Practical Art

We had eleven meetings, tackling a range of subjects including figures, insects, comedy, gates, buildings and bonfire night. Some of these we found very challenging but always enjoyable.

We decide on the project between us a month in advance. The project is not compulsory, we are quite at liberty to choose our own subjects.

We are a very friendly group. Help and advice is always available if needed, also we have a small library of art books which can be borrowed.

Our membership has increased to 16, and we now meet in room 2 which is large and airy with plenty of natural light. At the moment subscription is £2 per meeting paid in advance every 3 or 4 months, plus 50p for tea/coffee/biscuits.

The August display was a great success with all members contributing several pictures. The result was very pleasing.

We are ready to welcome new members. Anyone who wants to give it a go please come along for a free taster session on the 4th Tuesday of the month 10 - 12 noon in the Community Centre.

Ann Smith, Group Administrator

Scrabble and Snack

The Scrabble and Snack group meets twice monthly over the lunchtime period. We start with a snack which we take it in turns to prepare. We are a mixed bunch with the common factor that we all love to play Scrabble.

Currently we have room for two more members, so get in touch if you are interested. You'll be made very welcome.

Brenda Wyatt, Group Leader

Short Mat Bowls

With effect from January 2017 I was appointed Group Leader of March U3A SMBG. I have maintained this position for the past 12 months.

Group Members & Meetings. We currently have a total of 17 active members, most of whom attend our Bowls Session taking place on the third Monday of each month. The exception is during the months of *July, August & December* when our members have many other commitments during this period.

Bowls Equipment. At present time the SMBG has 2 main Bowling Mats which is sufficient to cope with a maximum of 18 playing members. We also have a Double Tiered Mat Handling Unit complete with 2 Winding Handles. This now enables us to ease the considerable effort required in winding the mats onto the rollers for storage after the afternoon bowls session finishes at 4pm. We purchased the 2nd handle because it was found that using a single handle was too strenuous for one rather elderly person. We used the 2nd handle for the 1st time in January & found that we could roll a mat at the first attempt and 100% less effort.

The Future. Should we be successful in attracting more players than the 18 maximum currently targeted it would be necessary to either hire another long room in March Community Centre or even possible to look for an alternative venue that can hold 3 mats. Obviously we would then also need to purchase another new Short Mat Bowls Mat which costs a considerable amount. This situation will be dealt with only if and when the situation arises.

Finance. Due to the coaching being given we have attracted new members and our numbers regularly range between 12 to 15 members who have remained playing thereby taking away our struggle to have sufficient funds to pay the bills.

Monthly Fees. Each member pays £3 *per monthly session. Members pay £15, in advance, for 5 months play.*

Roll Up Fees. Each member has, since inception, been paying a fee of 50p on arrival to help top up funds due to past low numbers. This will cease on the 19th March now that we are in a better financial position.

Community Centre Charges. The Group pays a monthly fee of £30 for Hall Hire.

Group Treasurer. Raymond Lewis, who was appointed Treasurer on 1 Feb 2008, when the SMBG was formed, will produce an end of Financial Year Statement to support this Annual Report. He has been ably supported by his wife Margaret who collects and records the monetary transactions at Roll Ups

The Bowls Competition. The Group Leader is currently in the process of re-installing the Annual Bowls Competition with a Trophy for the winner. Also, perhaps, other team prizes (tba).

Raffle. Under consideration is a small monthly raffle in a extra effort to create interest with the proceeds going towards paying for minor bowls items without troubling the March U3A Treasurer. **Short Mat Bowls** is a very easy and enjoyable sport and provides gentle exercise too. This combines with a Sociable Afternoon once a month for two hours. A short break is given about halfway through for Tea/Coffee etc. You do not need to know anything about bowling. We have spare bowls available, but would also welcome experienced players who bring their own bowls along with them. Individual instruction will be provided for beginners as and when required.

So why don't you just come along at about 1.50pm on the third Monday of each month and give it a go?

Ron Hall, Group Leader

Special Quilting

This past year has been a very busy one for all and very productive.

We have tried to concentrate on new patterns, involving new skills, which has worked well. Last spring we decided to make another quilt to be raffled among the members. We decided on a 'string quilt', basically made from small strips of off-cuts, a good way to use up odds and ends we tend to accumulate.

Everyone made at least one block, some industrious ones made more than one, which was very welcome. After 24 blocks had been made the assembly was started, time-consuming but very effective.

A border was made from more off-cuts and added making a nice framework to the completed quilt. During the August exhibition the quilt and a cushion were raffled, which raised £253! The quilt was won by Carol and the cushion by Beryl. They were highly delighted of course. After expenses the proceeds were donated to the Young Quilters' section of the Quilters' Guild. This special section concentrates on going into schools and small clubs to teach the art of quilting; essential if it is to survive as schools no longer seem to teach needlework. They hold monthly competitions with a small prize for the winner. This work is done by unpaid volunteers, which is much appreciated. At the Annual Quilt Show in the NEC there is a special section to exhibit works made by the youngsters, boys and girls, in three different age-ranges. Their work is often stunning and of high standard. Awards for the best ones are made by a team of judges.

A while ago I decided that our members needed to learn a bit more, so embarked on a new technique called Foundation Paper Piecing. Time to come out of their comfort-zone once more! I am pleasantly surprised to find how much they like this way of doing things, which will lead on to greater things (difficult stars with sharp points for one).

So we'll see how they all progress, looking promising at present. We have currently 15 members, which is a comfortable number to work with.

Joyce Thorne, Group Leader

Strollers

This group is going strong, currently consisting of 53 members. We have had an interesting year, with some walks in new places and venues and some repeated from years ago.

In March our walk had to be cancelled due to thunder storms being forecast, some went anyway, at their own risk of course.

April saw us go to Dersingham Bog, near Wolferton, a very interesting place full of surprises, such as chalk cliffs and boggy plants below.

In May we went to Shouldham Warren, an interesting wooded area set in farmland.

June had as destination Upwood, where we nearly lost our bearings, due to the change in landscape since the reconnaissance, but a lovely rural walk.

For the July walk we re-visited Hinchingsbrooke Park, which is a beautiful walk.

August saw us going to Stilton, a very surprising rural stroll, with a lot of history in that area.

Strollers (contd.)

For the September walk we went to Fen Drayton, beside the A14, but you don't notice that, there are several lakes in the area, left over from the construction of the A14, which make for a very scenic walk.

In October we tried a new walk in Somersham, also very scenic and rural.

November had us going to Ferry Meadows, always a good destination with plenty of bird-life.

December and January unfortunately had to be cancelled for lack of a leader.

February is our anniversary month, involving a local walk with lunch of soups, bread, cake etc. in St. Peter's Church Hall, The day turned out fine after much rain in the previous days.

For our continued existence we are dependent on members coming forward with plans for a walk and lunch venue, without which there will be no strolls.

Many thanks are due to our leaders: Ann Smith and helper, Jim and Rosemary Coote, Sylvia Fysh and helper, Brenda and John Wyatt, Sharon and John Smith; without these members' help we would not have gone far.

Joyce Thorne, Group Administrator

Sweet Young Things

As it is the end of my tenure as Group Leader for the Sweet Young Things Ladies Group, I look back on over 13 trips to various venues and activities this year as well as 11 members' meetings in The Ship Pub every month but one.

In February we joined the 'Grumpies' for a Ten Pin Bowling Match which was enjoyed by all. In March a group of us went to Oxburgh Hall, a Tudor Stately Home, by FACT bus with a driver who seemed to go on a magical mystery tour to get there! Still we got there eventually.

In April the Pamper Days at the College began and 10 ladies went on four consecutive weeks for facial, nails and cream teas which went on to May/June. Later in the month a group of us had a day out to Ely for sightseeing and shopping.

The Last Pamper Day was in June and also that month a group went by coach to Lincoln, with a guided tour around the city.

In August we had a great day out in Cromer, paddling, fish & chip lunch, visiting a Horse sanctuary, all the things that you do at the seaside and we were very lucky with the weather.

In October we went to Melton Mowbray by coach, with a guided walking tour of the Town Centre and a visit to the pork pie factory to see how these are made, with lunch in a very old pub right in the market place.

In November there was a trip to Boundary Mills outlet centre near Grantham by coach for early Christmas shopping where some good bargains were had.

Sweet Young Things (contd.)

In December a small group of us went back to Melton Mowbray by FACT bus for the Christmas Market which was great fun though it was quite a cold day. Also in December a group of us went to the Cressett Theatre in Peterborough to see a traditional Pantomime which was very funny indeed.

There were no trips in January 2018 as I was away on holiday but we were back to the ten pin bowling match with the Grumpies in February 2018.

As I said at the beginning I will be standing down in March 2018 as Group Leader. It has been quite a ride for the last two years and I hope that the lady who takes over from me will enjoy it as much as I have.

Dorothy Hughes, Group Leader

Table Tennis

The table tennis group held its first session on the 27th March 2017 and have continued to meet on the second and fourth Mondays of the month at the FE Centre between 10.00 am and 12 noon.

We now have 16 regular players and the average attendance per session is 12.

The group use two tables so there are always 8 group members in play which allows the other members the chance to get their breath back and help with the scoring if required.

We welcome new players so if you would like to come along for a taster all you need is a pair of soft soled shoes, the need for a little light exercise with some fun and laughs along the way.

The charge per session is £3 which covers the cost of the hall hire, equipment and refreshments.

Paul Bass, Group Leader

Theatre Group

2017 saw our Group continue to flourish and 11 shows were attended and enjoyed as far away as London to as close as King's Lynn. Membership, paid annually in March of each year, remains £2 per member and covers all administration costs over that year: telephone calls to theatres for availability and provisional bookings; telephone calls to theatres to confirm/cancel/amend provisional bookings; telephone calls to theatres to discover running time of show so transport providers can be made aware of pick-up times for journey home (this information is often not available until just before the show opens); telephone calls to transport providers (followed by confirmation emails); internet research of what's on; regular contact with members via email, telephone or letter; stationery supplies including receipt books, pens, record books, stamps, envelopes and print paper, plus contribution towards cost of printer ink.

We continue to attend a diverse mix of theatre entertainments.

New members are always welcome and their membership is not conditional on how many shows they attend. However, as we are a group, there is a minimum number of interested persons needed to book seats and/or transport for any one show. If that number is not met then the provisional booking is cancelled.

Theatre Group (contd.)

Shows attended in 2017 included:-

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cirque du Soleil | The Royal Albert Hall |
| Funny Girl | Milton Keynes Theatre |
| Peter Pan on Ice | Kings Lynn Corn Exchange |
| Blood Brothers | Milton Keynes Theatre |
| Dreamboats & Petticoats | Milton Keynes Theatre |
| Shakespeare Festival | Kings College Cambridge |
| Cabaret | Milton Keynes Theatre |
| Mama Mia | Milton Keynes Theatre |
| The Lion King | The Lyceum Theatre, London |
| Sunset Boulevard | Milton Keynes Theatre |
| English National Ballet | Milton Keynes Theatre |

All booked transport leaves from City Road Car Park in March and time is always allocated to allow for lunch and/or shopping/sightseeing before the show starts. Almost without exception the shows are matinee performances.

Nine Shows have already been booked for 2018 at Milton Keynes Theatre and The London Palladium. As we are group members of both ATG Tickets and GroupLine we get 'early bird' notification of shows before they become available to the general public; and also get very competitive prices together with long lead-times between provisional booking and confirmation/pay date.

Jill Osler, Group Leader

Tin Whistle Group

We have had six members since Sept, expanded to seven in December. We meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. The Whistlers are a dedicated Band and are coming to realise more and more that there is much more to tin whistling than merely putting it to your mouth and blowing: breath control; aural acuity; digital dexterity; musicianship.....a musical education in micro!

We started using C whistles and have added D whistles to our quivers recently, which means more challenge and more scope. The group has made rapid progress and is working towards a public performance in the (near?) future.

We are a multi-ability Band, some with little musical background, but a brave Band, amazing in its elasticity! We are working on our first 100 tunes.

Paddy McEvoy, Group Leader

Understanding Art

There are two groups – an afternoon group and an evening group. Both groups meet monthly at our home and watch and discuss art using DVD courses.

The evening group completed a course on the Impressionists in August and have just begun two new courses. One is entitled, 'The World's Greatest Paintings', and the other is taking us on a tour of the New York Museum of Art.

Understanding Art (contd.)

The afternoon group has completed a 'History of European Art' - a course enjoyed previously by the evening group. The group has now started the course on Impressionists and one about Art of the Northern Renaissance.

Variety is added by the occasional use of photographs that I have taken on visits to galleries in Europe. Also both groups watched a DVD about Charleston and the community of artists who lived there in the early 20th century including Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant.

David Boxall, Group Leader

Walkers

This was the group's fifth year of operation and was very successful with several new members and consistent attendance.

Membership and participation:

There are currently 30 members, some having left during the year but new people having joined. 12 walks were completed with an average of 17 walkers per walk though on occasions we had as many as 21 or 22. The smaller groups were in the mid summer months, when some were probably on holiday, rather than the cold wintry months when walkers regularly turned out.

Two of the walks were organised and led by group members, the group leaders having been absent, which was a great help. Some group members have also suggested some very good walks.

The walks:

All the walks were the usual 5-6 miles long, taking between 2 - 2.5 hours. We have been very lucky with the weather.

The walk destinations included the following areas: Colne/Somersham, Heacham, Wiggshall St. Germans, Stilton, Castle Acre, Ely, Houghton/St Ives, Downham Market, Shouldham Warren, Roydon Common and Manea (followed by a Christmas meal) and Ramsey.

We continue to meet initially at 9.15 a.m. on the third Friday of each month in the City Road car park and can always offer a lift to anyone requiring this. Some members prefer to drive straight to each walk starting point, which is usually within a 30 mile radius of March, less than that if possible. We try to start from a pub or eating place so that we can pre order lunch, use facilities and maybe have a coffee before starting off. We then return and usually have a very convivial lunch together.

This is a lovely, friendly group of people of varying walking ability and we welcome new members or anyone just wanting to come along for a 'taster'. If you would like to give it a try please contact Sharon or John on 01354 279871 or e mail shazza19652@yahoo.co.uk.

Sharon and John Smith, Group Leaders

Who do you think you are?

There is nothing to report as no one this last year has wanted to look into their past.

I think when the program 'Who do you think you are' comes back on the television, then people may start to think about it and want to find out about their ancestors.

Valerie Gobie, Group Leader