



## **ANNUAL REPORTS**

**APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020**

**The Object of March U3A is :**

**The advancement of education and, in particular, the education of older people and those who are retired from full time work by all means, including associated activities conducive to learning and personal development, who reside in March, Cambridgeshire, and the surrounding area.**

**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.**

**MARCH U3A is a Registered Charity, Number 1172951**

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019/20**

Spring seems more like a time for looking forward than looking back. We will have a new Chairman, new Committee and new ideas on how March U3A should progress.

While there will be changes in every organisation over time many things stay the same. The ethos of the Third Age Trust and the U3A movement continues. Learning is a central part of what we do and this has developed this year through more new groups; activities and fun have also played their part leading to growth in membership. Inevitably we have lost members too, through natural movement and illness. It is a condition of ageing that we lose friends and miss them.

This has been a year when many of those on the Committee have experienced health problems for themselves or their families and despite these problems they have continued to work hard to keep March U3A going. I am grateful to all of them: David Rapetti who stepped up to take on the vice-chairmanship as well as organising the speakers rota, Julia Lewis who continued to be an excellent secretary despite ill health and many hospital appointments, Dave Walton who kept Beacon going and managed the accounts so well, Marion George, our membership secretary and joint organiser of raffles with Paula Washington. The funds raised by these activities help offset our social expenses. Keith Jolly who has acted as Groups Co-Ordinator and editor of the March Matters magazine, Pauline Horton who is assistant treasurer and everything to do with catering, Leon Duncan who takes care of Health and Safety and is always present to help set up the monthly meeting, Jan Grayson who has taken over the speakers rota, helped with welfare and is now acting as our minutes secretary, Dorothy Hughes whom we co-opted, has also helped with welfare and as assistant to Keith when he was unavailable, organising the August meeting which was very successful; Trudi Davies who has sent cards, taken flowers and generally kept in touch with members who have been ill.

While these people have been outstanding, so too have many others who have stepped forward to help: Alan Burdass, Maureen Malvern, Garry Malvern, Jean Howes, Margaret and Raymond Lewis, Anne Bowden, Clive Winn, Christine and Colin Head, Jean Rapetti and Pat Frost who have looked after the bookstall, Sue Robinson and the drinks team who manage so efficiently, Joyce Thorne who sorts out Gift Aid and finally the Group Leaders who give time, energy and often houseroom to the group meetings in all their forms and my husband, Chris.

Things I have especially enjoyed include the Christmas Tree Festival: I asked for decorations and you produced decorations, loads of them and the tree looked good. The Christmas meeting and lunch: one featuring Ann's excellent cakes and the other some varieties of 'Dad' dancing. Mostly I have enjoyed the fact that people want to join us and share in our activities. We can now offer everything from stargazing with Astronomy to feet on the ground Walking groups and many topics in-between. There is always room for development, more ways for members to help. Make this the year you set up an antiques group or wild water swimming or just volunteer for the committee. You won't regret it.

***Lynda Andrews***

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The March U3A have three accounts with banking done at the Nat West Bank. The first is our Current Account into which all your membership money is paid, and all expenses incurred in running your U3A are paid out. These expenses are hire fees for our meeting Hall, additional service rooms, storage of our equipment, Speaker fees, refreshments and presentations.

We also hold a Reserve account which contains a reasonable amount of reserve money to take account of any unexpected expenses that may be incurred such as replacement of equipment. As a charity we are not allowed to build up any large reserves of money.

Our third account is used for money that groups pay into us. This is for room hire, equipment and materials used by these groups. This money is ring-fenced for each individual group, as each group is self financing. This makes it much easier to manage each individual group's payments in and to pay out their expenses.

Despite the room rental costs at the Community Centre having risen for all the rooms in the centre, up till now as a main user we had not been affected. However we have had to rent an extra room (no.7) due to increased attendance at monthly meetings, which have increased our costs to £1320 per year. We also pay for the three storage cupboards we use and the equipment we have stored there, i.e. bowls mats rack and table tennis tables. This amounts to £240 per year which is not unexpected and affordable.

Another cost from next April will be for our administration system, Beacon, which is £1 per head for each current member - 295 last year but now up to 320 at the moment. The Third Age Trust is also looking to introduce a new "Beacon 2 System" so no doubt the costs will rise again in the future.

Capitation Fees to the Third Age Trust are based on the number of members we have - £3.50 comes out of each membership fee. All U3A's pay this to support the Head Office and Networks and the facilities they provide. If you belong to more than one U3A you only pay this at your main U3A.

We have arranged a variety of speakers over the past year which will cost around £1400 by the end of this financial year. Speaker costs have risen as we would expect, but most have been well received and good value. During the year we have supported groups with requests for equipment from the Mah-jong and Bridge Groups. The Country Dancing group, First Aid sessions and Group Leaders' Meeting were also supported for room hire. Groups normally finance themselves but the Committee are always willing to help provide extra support for groups especially new group start-ups.

One of the ways you can help your U3A if you are a UK Tax Payer is to sign up to allow us to claim Gift Aid on your membership fee. As we are a Charity this allows us to claim £3.25 on each £15 donation, as the Tax Office calls it. There are around 80 members who do this for us at the moment, so if you are a UK tax payer and can help please pick up a form from the monthly meetings, or when you renew your membership next time.

The Raffles have done especially well this year with over £300 being raised to help support our Christmas Parties, presentations and Welfare.

Overall our U3A is running smoothly and with increased membership the money in the accounts is more or less the same as last year. We have a £3000 reserve in an account to deal with any unseen expenses, and to cope with equipment renewals as they arise. I am cautiously optimistic about our future.

***Dave Walton (Treasurer)***

## **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 and complies with the GDPR regulations to keep data safe and the risk of losing any information minimised.

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.

The Beacon mass email system is a real success, as it allows all members to be contacted individually or all at once, with personalised messages. Group leaders can also email members in their own group and other group leaders. This has proved really useful.

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 and 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 over 300 of our 328 membership having email addresses. Beacon has for the last few years been a real step forward, for the way our U3A has been managed.

We now wait for the new Beacon 2 system, which is underway with it's new promised enhancements, to come on stream and hopefully it will appear this year. I will look forward to us getting the opportunity to migrate to the new system although I would not like to be first. Lets see how it goes.

Hopefully the cost of the new system will not be too high, as we need to keep the cost of administration down as much as possible.

If you would be interested in knowing more about our Beacon Administration System, please contact me and I will be pleased to show you around it, with a view that you might wish to be involved more with how our committee functions.

***Dave Walton, Data Administrator***

## **WELFARE**

Another year has passed by so quickly. Luckily, I did not have too many people who needed comforting. So far this year I have sent six cards with flowers or chocolates, yum, yum! for those who needed some light relief.

As some of you may be aware, I was out of action for a while with my knee replacement and I am grateful for Jan Grayson taking over to assist me. She visited 6 people, including myself and my husband (he loved his jam, marmalade and chutney). What do you give a man?

We rely so much on members informing us of other members who are in some need whether they are poorly or have had a bereavement. Therefore, I should just like to remind you of contact details:

**Trudi Davies**  
[daviesg7@aol.com](mailto:daviesg7@aol.com)  
01354 653986

**Jan Grayson**  
[mezzojan76@gmail.com](mailto:mezzojan76@gmail.com)  
01354 658796

May I take this opportunity to wish all members a healthy and happy Roaring 20s.

***G (Trudi) Davies, Welfare Officer***

## GROUP CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

It has been a busy time for groups since the 2019 AGM with the formation of new ones, a couple of “add on” groups and some other matters.

Way back in 2010 we issued a Group Leaders Handbook cobbled together from what had then been published by The Third Age Trust at that time, with the addition of items relevant to March U3A. Unfortunately TAT decided to upgrade their version but never did (till now), so we haven't been able to upgrade it. We now have a sub-committee working on a new document which will include a lot more information and help for Group Leaders, and which we aim to publish before the 2020 AGM and issue at the Group Leaders meeting next month.

In March U3A any new group has to be approved by the committee and the way we do this is for the inaugural (or setting up meeting) to be chaired by the Groups Co-ordinator who will get the group started on the right track according to current TAT guidelines..

Over ten new groups have emerged in the last year, namely, Astronomy, Country Dancing, Current Affairs, Gardening Two, Lunch, Music from the Musicals, Science and Technology, an additional Understanding Art, Tai Chi and Writing Support, all thriving in their own way. There has been the odd glitch of course when a group leader has had to pull out for some reason or when health has been an issue, but our 325 plus membership now has a choice of well over fifty groups to choose from, and all thanks to our “engine room” of volunteer group leaders to whom we offer our heartfelt thanks for their great work. By the time you read this there will likely be another two, a third Card Playing group, plus a Buying and Selling group

The “Sweeties”, one of our larger groups, is looking for someone to take over the helm. Without a group leader, facilities manager, organiser (call him/her what you will) the group cannot exist, so its members will need to do a bit of soul searching straight away. We did attempt to get your interest in some other groups, Archery, and a second Card Making group for example, sadly without success. Please note that group leaders **must** open a waiting list (easy to set up using Beacon) **and tell the committee** when they cannot, for whatever reason, accept a member who wishes to join their group.

Finally, this is my second session as **Groups Co-ordinator**, 2020 is my ninth year in the role, when I will be 82, so I am looking to hand over so this will be my last year. Come in as assistant; you do not need to be on the committee until you take over at the 2021 AGM. It's not difficult and is very rewarding. Neither will I continue as **March Matters** editor which I took over from Jen Boxall, in 2012, though I am happy to help somebody to take it on. Just let the committee know.

**Keith Jolly,**  
**Groups Coordinator**

## **GROUPS ANNUAL REPORTS**

### **Armchair Travel**

The group meets monthly in the afternoon to enjoy 'Armchair Travel'. The usual pattern is to watch three films. We have visited 'Great Geographical Wonders' using the Great Courses DVD e.g. Rock of Gibraltar, Yellowstone Park. Train journeys have included Namibia, Zimbabwe, China, Vietnam and Cuba. We have started a new course that is touring significant sites in Great Britain.

***David Boxall, Group Leader***

### **Astronomy**

The Astronomy Group was formed in November 2019, and so far we have seven active members. We describe ourselves as follows:

“The Astronomy Group are a friendly bunch of people interested in the Night Sky. We meet on the third Thursday of every month. We may meet indoors to watch videos and have astronomical chats, or meet outdoors to look at the stars. Everyone is welcome, from those with an interest but no equipment or expertise, to those with their own telescopes.”

As a new group, we have only met twice in 2019, but we have put together a collection of resources for group members, including astronomy apps, websites, books & contacts. Our plans for 2020 include an observation night in January (where we shall train our telescopes at various objects in the night sky), and a lecture at the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge (where we can also use their big telescopes).

Finally, we did observe the sky on Christmas Eve, but it was too cloudy to see Santa ...

***Ian Hewitt, Group Leader***

### **Birdwatching**

This group started early in 2012 so this is my eighth Annual Report.

I can report once again we've had an enjoyable year of looking at our feathered friends whilst at the same time enjoying walking in our lovely countryside and enjoying the company of people who share our interests, not only in birds but in nature in general. It's also very good for us to get some exercise and fresh air, so good for our health.

We haven't tried any new destinations this year but have a couple in mind to explore soon.

We are looking forward to another year, starting with a day out to Ferry Meadows, Peterborough.

***Margaret Lloyd, Group Leader***

## **Board Games**

We as a group have had a good year with meetings each month at my home. We start at 1.30pm on the third Wednesday of each month. There are a variety of games that are on offer but the most popular by far is Rummicub. We have a break halfway through the afternoon for refreshments and a general chat and then play on until about 4.30pm, longer if people wish to play on. There are usually nine or ten people who come on a regular basis but room for more if anyone fancies giving it a try.

To contact me ring 01354 650033 or e mail [joan.perring@gmail.com](mailto:joan.perring@gmail.com)

***Joan Perring, Group Leader***

## **Bridge**

Bridge group has had another good year. Our weekly sessions include social chit chat as well as bridge. We have room for three tables which means we can accommodate 12 people. We are often short of 12 which means some players missing out on playing so if there are any bridge players out there .....

***Michael Robinson, Group Leader***

## **Card Making**

During the past twelve months we have had eleven meetings where we have made cards plus a 'coffee and cake' get together in December. In November Margaret Duke led the group and we made a very attractive Snowman design Christmas card.

There are a total of nine members, but it is only possible to seat six for the practical meeting. To help solve this problem, if a member is unable to attend the monthly meeting, their place is offered to another member of the group. It is not an ideal solution, but it seems to have worked quite successfully this year.

U3A does not like to say that a group is "full" so, in the Autumn an invitation was sent for interested members to form a second card making group.

***Julia Wright, Group Leader***

## **Classical Music Group**

Three groups are now established each one meeting monthly in our home. Each group watches an informative DVD in the first half. Group 1 started the year by learning about Shostakovich and are now finding out about the Symphony. Group 3, the newest group, are also learning about the Symphony. Group 2's theme is Tchaikovsky. After the tea break each group listens to a selection of music.

***David Boxall, Group Leader***



## **Classic Film**

When I came to write the annual report of the Classic Film Group I read what I wrote last year, and was so impressed I thought "I can't improve on that". So here it is again. The only change is that I must add another omniscient librarian, Allan Whyte, and thank all of them for lending the rest of us so much pleasure.

The description of the aims of this group says that we watch films that are worth seeing, worth seeing again, and are worth talking about. It is not possible to define the term "Classic" more accurately, and though we have seen films made in almost every decade since Talkies began, and from most continents, we do not often have to make allowances. As forecast in last year's report, we now meet twice a month, one of the meetings showing a film chosen by each individual member and the other meeting sticking to the programme chosen by our omniscient librarians, Marietta and Lynda. With the list of forthcoming attractions on the March U3A website, any member can come to any film if they book in first, to ensure there is a seat available.

I think we are living in an age of great film makers, great screen actors and challenging themes, so that many that have been produced this year will surely be shown by this U3A group eventually. With some films no longer opening in cinemas but streaming on TV, the end of the dvd may not be far away. Until that time comes, we shall be putting the dvd into the player in anticipation of some stirring times ahead, to lose ourselves in, to make us see things more clearly, perhaps, or differently, to change our lives, to help us understand more profoundly, to thrill or horrify, or simply to make us laugh at the delights with which we are presented.

***Carol Jones, Group Leader***

## **Computer Clinic**

***No report submitted.***

## **Country Dancing**

This is a small but steady group. We have had a lot of fun learning how to do this again, when many of us haven't done it since school. We would really welcome new members and, since we are having a dancing opportunity in May, it could be a good time to start. Practically we do need more members to be viable. Everyone is welcome, especially more men as we sometimes forget which part we are dancing. It's good exercise too.

***Lynda Andrews, Group Leader***

## **Craft**

Every Tuesday you can hear us laughing in room 4 at the Community Centre; other people sometimes come in to see what we are up to. Amazingly we make lots of stuff and enjoy a variety of crafts. This year we have crocheted hair, knitted socks, toddlers, baby jackets and bears, cross stitched, quilted, sewed tapestry and taken up hems. Jewellery has sparkled and an assortment of biscuits and home-made cakes consumed. We may not have put the entire world to rights but we do know how it should be done! You are welcome to join us.

***Lynda Andrews, Group Leader***

## **Creative Writing**

The Group consists of 9 members who meet on the 3rd Wednesday of each month between 2:30pm and 4:30pm, usually at my home. One member has just advised me that they wish to leave the group which will see 8 members going into 2020. There is no fee for being a member, and due to such small numbers I have elected to waive the £0.50p 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 other's work. Over the last 12 months themes have been based on:-

- Love
- Poem or Story to include 5 specific words
- The Day I Laughed Out Loud
- Childhood Memories
- Poem or Story to include 5 chosen words
- Summertime
- 'The Natty Guy has got it in for me'
- Member's free choice
- Money
- Freedom
- Wishful Thinking

Works are archived so that we have a paper trail of achievements at any one time.

Members are 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)**

We have enjoyed our meetings over the past year, regularly meeting every second and fourth Monday afternoon. We play in the back room of The Ship public house on Nene Parade, March and normally play for about 2 hours. We currently have 16 registered members, although the attendance is usually between 10 and 14.

We have welcomed some new members who have revisited the game after a gap of many years. This year we didn't plan any social events partly because every meeting is a social event in itself, although the landlord did provide some Christmas fare at one of our December meetings. Our aspiration to join a local league did not materialise but the idea has not been entirely abandoned. A survey of members showed that they are happy to continue as we are and we look forward to another enjoyable year. New members are welcome and lessons can be given if you wish to learn the game.

***Colin Head, Group Leader***

## **Current Affairs**

We have had some very interesting sessions with a wide range of subjects ranging from Climate Change to Royalty and United Nations (is it fit for purpose?) to Marriage in the Modern Age.

There are 12 of us in the Group with a wide range of interests and political allegiances. This makes for some animated discussions which is good. There is hardly a lull in conversation and the time just flies by.

Any new members will always be welcome and, as we meet in the Library, it is reasonably accessible to anyone. It is warm too!!

***David Rapetti, Group Leader***

## **Digital Photography**

During 2019 we lost two members but late on in the year we gained two new members. We now have 13 members at the start of 2020 and we meet at the F.E Centre on the first Thursday of alternate months. On the other months we have trips out.

In 2019 we had four field trips out to the following;

February.      Walsingham Priory/Abbey and the village of Walsingham.

May.            Gordon Boswell Romany Museum  
                    and Crowland Abbey.

June.            Pensthorpe Natural Park.

September.    Welney Wetland Centre.

***David Bowden, Group Leader***

## **Dressmaking**

The Dressmaking Group has continued to meet every 2nd and 4th Tuesdays for our regular 3 hour session. Group members have been making a variety of items from dresses to capes to children's clothes, including some recycling.

We are a very sociable group, but at the same time manage to get quite a bit of work done! There are a total of 7 ladies who come to my home and either bring their own machines or use mine. One of my group left during the year, but another lady joined, so the numbers remain the same.

All in all, a very successful year.

***Ann Bowden, Group Leader***

## **Exploring World Faiths**

This group stopped meeting in July. Please see the article in the December 'March Matters' that explains the areas the group has covered. I had always seen this as a time limited group that would finish when we had studied the major religions and visited places of worship in the vicinity.

***Jennifer Boxall, Group Leader***

## **Family History**

The Family History group meet at the Library in March between 2 and 4pm on the third Thursday of the month.

We try and help one another with any problems we come across as we go further back with our family trees or help others to begin theirs.

***Ann Bass, Group Leader***

## **Filmgoers**

We have had a few trips, notably to live streamed ballet. It is a good link for anyone who doesn't want to go alone to the cinema.

***Lynda Andrews, Group Leader***

## **Flower Arranging**

The Flower Arranging group started in September 2019 . There was no session in December 2019 and January 2020

September 12<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Vase Arrangement: Session included how to cut and display flowers in a shaped design. (NO PHOTOS TAKEN)

October 10<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Circular Arrangement: A table display was made using greenery and flowers.

November 14<sup>th</sup> 2019 – L-Shaped Arrangement: A shelf L-shaped display was made with greenery and flowers.

***Sandra Mills, Group Leader***

## **Gardening Group 1**

I have been running the Gardening Group for four years and have a total of 16 members who meet at my home/garden on the first Wednesday of the month from February to December each year. This year we had already been out earlier for our Christmas meal, so at the December meeting Sandra, who runs the Flower Arranging Group, joined us and gave a demonstration of how to produce a seasonal flower display. Everybody thoroughly enjoyed this and it was then followed by a buffet.

This year we hope to arrange joint outing/s with Gardening Group 2 to gardens or garden centres which are still to be decided.

***Jean Howes, Group Leader***

## **Gardening Group 2**

Garden Group 2 meets on the the 2nd Monday of every month. We are a group of twelve. The group was started in July 2018 and I hope it has proven successful. We closed our last meeting in December with a meal at the Station Road carvery to end a interesting and informative year.

We start our next meeting in February when we hope to include an outing to Chippenham Park near Newmarket to see the snowdrops. We are also planning a meeting where we can help bees to give them a safe water source, how to make it and how to make a fat ball feeder made of coppice dogwood stems. These make a colourful feeder which blue tits and sparrows love. We will be discussing bulbs, corms and tubers for every month and different combinations to choose, so our gardens have flowers for every season of the year.

Each month we have a quiz on garden plants and another trip to a garden is planned. Hopefully we will be able to persuade a voluntary experienced gardener to speak to us. We exchange plants and seeds, we talk about plants, when to put plants into the soil and how to care for them throughout the year.

***Sue Robinson, Group Leader***

## **Geography**

The Geography group is using two courses one about Oceanography and the other Polar Regions. Both are very varied covering mapping, scientific investigations, animal and human life, and exploration.

***David Boxall, Group Leader***

## **Grumpy Old Men**

The Grumpies have had another successful year. We are a men only group who meet at the Ship pub in town on one Wednesday each month to socialise and to discuss possible activities for the group and places to visit. We aim to have an outing to a place of interest once per month. We have 42 members of which 20 were regularly involved.

During 2019 we completed eight visits which included:

- A tenpin bowling match with members of the Sweeties group at Guyhirn bowling alley
- A tour of Masteroast coffee blenders site in Peterborough
- Tour of English Distillery at Gt Yeldham in Essex
- Visit to RAF Wyton Pathfinders museum, including organised talks
- Elgoods brewery in Wisbech
- Visit to the Armed Police museum in Chatteris
- A canal boat trip from March to Outwell including fish and chip lunch
- Greyhound racing at Peterborough

On average 15 members attended each trip although sometimes it was as many as 22 or as low as 10.

If anyone is interested in joining our friendly, outgoing group please get in touch by ringing myself on 01354 279871 or by e mailing me: [tetleyman16@gmail.com](mailto:tetleyman16@gmail.com)

***John Smith, Group Leader***

## **Health Walks**

Our Group is into its 11th year. A few members have had serious health problems in the last year, but we are more or less back to normal once more.

We meet every Monday morning at the car park behind Iceland Store. The walk starts at 10am prompt and lasts between 45 minutes and 1 hour. Our routes are around March - e.g. Silt Road, West End, Nene Parade, Riversides, Barker's Lane Field Baulk, All Saints, George Campbell walks, plus the Prison Walk which we all really enjoy. The route depends on the weather and conditions underfoot.

Numbers vary on each walk, usually there are 14 to 19. We have 20 members in the group. After the walk we meet in Wetherspoon's for coffee and a chat. We try to meet for lunch once a year.

***Rose Morrissey, Group Leader***

## **History - Group 1**

History group 1 meets on the first Tuesday of each month at my home. We have been watching videos of "Ancient Greek Civilisation", which we have completed. In its place we have started a course on Churchill. In addition we are half way through a series on "The Early Middle Ages".

***Alan Burdass, Group Leader***

## **History - Group 2**

History Group 2 has been working its way through the Tudors and the Stuarts all year and we are nearing the end of it. We are going to start on another DVD about the Pharaohs starting at the end of January when we will also welcome a new member to this group.

***Maureen Malvern, Group Leader.***

## **Learn a Language Groups**

### **French**

We continue to meet and discuss topics on French, hoping to keep the long ago vocabulary up and learn new words. We don't do much grammar, our aim being to be understood by French people. New members always welcome, you only need a few words and a sense of fun.

***Lynda Andrews Group Leader***

### **German**

Owing to illness in 2019 the group did not meet for several weeks. However, we are now back to normal (almost) and classes have restarted. We meet in the town library every Saturday afternoon at 2.00pm and anyone is welcome. We are doing German conversation using a computer course and many books. This is a small group of five or six.

***Margaret Cumming, Group Leader***

### **Spanish**

The group meets on a fortnightly basis in March library it is a small group which makes it easy for everyone to get involved. Most members are long-standing and some have lived in Spain. The emphasis is on spoken Spanish with occasional reading of Spanish the standard is best described as intermediate. Topics covered are those which would be useful for someone visiting or going to live in Spain

***Norman Kay, Group Leader***

## **Learn to Love Jazz**

The group meets once per month on the third Monday between 2pm to 4pm. The venues for the meetings are around individual houses. We are currently using the facilities of You Tube and individual Tablets and Speakers. The use of CDs, DVDs and Vinyl are occasionally used as well.

The membership consists of eight people five men and three women. We welcome new members and offer a taster session for anyone considering joining us. There is no charge to belong to the group other than the host may provide Tea\Coffee and biscuits when possible.

When one mentions the word Jazz to some people they are immediately turned off. I like to think of Jazz almost on racist terms with individuals having their own prejudices about what Jazz means. When I first joined I had set ideas and prejudices of my own. I very much liked, and still do, Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald but the variety of music contained in the term Jazz is immense, which I have found both to my interest and enjoyment. I don't enjoy everything we play and between us we have debates and discussions why this may be.

We have travelled to Ramsey and Kings Lynn during 2019 to see live performances. The first was to Ramsey Library where we were given an introduction to The History of Jazz by a very competent four piece band led by Trumpeter Paul Higgs. The second was to Kings Lynn to watch the 60th Anniversary of Ronnie Scots Quintet. Both performances were received warmly by all who attended. If you would like to join the group for a taster contact me for a chat about the process.

***Mike Manze, Group Leader***

## **Lunch Group**

Thanks to Val Simons for leading the group initially. For personal reasons she has had to stop organising the group. This group started small but now has about 30 people on the membership list following an email to all members via Beacon. At the time of writing the group is in the developmental stage with a very positive future. Lunches are planned in March and nearby towns and villages.

***Jen Boxall, Group Leader***

## **Mah Jong**

Our group meets on Friday afternoons every week. You don't have to know how to play, it's very hard to explain, the best way is to come along and watch us play and I can guarantee by the end of a season you will have had a go at playing. If you have played Mah-jong on the internet, it is not how we play; we play in groups of three or four and there is usually about sixteen of us,

We are looking for new members so if you are interested please contact me on [mahjong5@btinternet.com](mailto:mahjong5@btinternet.com).

***Beryl Walton, Group Leader***

## **Model Making 2**

The group continues to meet monthly at members' homes despite only having four attendees. The main areas currently covered are Model Railways and Dolls House making. We discuss various modelling techniques, show practical examples of our modelling activities and share experience. Where feasible, we visit various model making related exhibitions.

We are keen to invite additional model makers or those aspiring to take up the hobby but are perhaps nervous to make a start through lack of skills/knowledge. Whether it is Model Railways, Dolls Houses, Model Engineering, Radio Controlled Model Aircraft/Cars, Military Dioramas, etc. we are available and keen to help.

***Gerry Willmott, Group Leader***

## **Petanque**

For those of you not familiar with Petanque, it is the French version of Bowls. The balls used are made with steel and approximately the size of a tennis ball. It is a simple and easy game played in teams. Although you start to develop certain skills to challenge your opponents, the game is played with a sense of fun.

We start play on the first Thursday of April at 2pm at the Five All's Public House in Benwick which is proving to be a very good venue. The pub facilities are there for our convenience including a glass of something nice to refresh you during play. We have a good rapport within the group and spend quite a lot of time laughing with each other.

Last year in mid-Summer we had a trip to Old Hunstanton beach for a game followed by an al-fresco lunch and a drink. This was very enjoyable and we hope to do the same this year.

At the end of our playing year which runs for as long as the weather holds, we have a pre-Christmas dinner, usually held at The Three Tuns Public House in Doddington. This is subsidised by the group. Last year we had 26 members and partners turn out for a good meal.

Anyone interested in coming along for a taster session please speak to me either at the monthly meeting or call me on 01354 278537.

***Leon Duncan, Group Leader.***

## **Poetry Appreciation**

The Group has 8 members who meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 10.30am. The meetings are usually held at the home of Jill Osler, Group Leader, although a new Group Leader, Brenda Wyatt, will take over from February 2020. There currently 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 takes it in turn to read aloud their poems of choice and comment accordingly if necessary. Subjects have ranged from:

- New
- Weather
- Member's choice
- Water
- Autumn
- Births, Marriages or Deaths
- Anything Nice
- Animals
- Far Away Places

Throughout the year a few monthly meetings were held at other members' homes and it was agreed that in 2020 this would continue.

We have had some interest from new U3A members during the year and if anyone is interested in possibly joining our group in 2020 then perhaps they would like a 'taster' session first; although there are a maximum number of members to keep it practicable. All they need to do is contact the new Group Leader.

***Jill Osler, Group Leader***



## **Practical Art**

We had eleven meetings and tackled a range of different subjects. They were seascapes, Spring, abstract art, hares/rabbits, fairgrounds, advertisements, shells, trees and stumps, still life and cats. We all enjoyed the challenges and were pleased with the results.

Our display in August was very well received by U3A members and showed a range of abilities. We are a self-help group as we do not have a tutor at the moment, but we all help and encourage each other. Some of our members have been painting and drawing for many years and have been able to pass on their knowledge to the beginners. We are a very friendly group and our meetings are very enjoyable with lots of social interaction included.

At each meeting we decide between us what the next subject will be. This is just to focus us and is not compulsory; all members are free to choose their own subject and medium.

Although we are gaining new members each year, we still have plenty of room to accommodate new artists who would receive a warm welcome. We would particularly welcome someone who would be able to give us some tuition. I would be happy to continue as administrator if desired so that they would be free to teach only.

We meet in the Community Centre on the fourth Tuesday in the month from 10am – 12 noon. We are in room 2 which has plenty of natural light and space. At the moment the subscription for hire of the room is £2 per meeting paid 3 or 4 months in advance. Coffee/tea and biscuits are included.

We would love to have new members so why not come along for a taster session to see what we get up to. Please ring me if you have any queries. 01354 741418.

***Ann Smith, Administrator***

## **Psychology of Religion and Spirituality**

The idea of starting a new group on the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality was developed by a group of individuals who had been members of the Exploring World Faiths Group which came to an end on the 24th July 2019. The group wanted to continue exploring world religions but in a new and exciting way that did not repeat what had been covered in the World Faiths Group. The aim of the group will be to explore the psychology of religion and spirituality from the human psychological point of view. Session by session the group will look at the study of religion from a psychological perspective, concentrating on three primary areas that may be broadly characterized as past, present, and future.

The group will explore what psychological factors gave rise to particular religious beliefs in various societies and cultures, or what psychological factors were responsible for a particular individual's adoption of certain Religious beliefs. Can all religious belief be explained by natural human psychology without any reference to divine intervention?

**Present:** The group will explore the psychological impact of specific attitudes and practices in a religious community or individual? When a person joins a religious group, it often seems to result in improved mental health. What part of this is due to natural psychological consequences of uniting with others in common cause and having a feeling of belonging, and what (if any) is the result of divine intervention?

**Future:** The group will explore the likely psychological consequences of religious belief and practice for the individual and for society. The group will explore from a psychological point of view the predictive consequences of religious belief. For instance, a particular belief will cause those who believe it to respond in a certain way. People who believe that the end of the world is imminent might be more likely to withdraw from society. It may also be the case that people who have experienced forgiveness of sin are more likely to live happy, productive lives.

## **Psychology of Religion and Spirituality ..... continued**

The group met for the first time in October 2019. After an initial introduction on what is the 'psychology of religion and spirituality' the group members were given two questionnaires to complete. The first questionnaire asked 'how religious are you?' and the second 'how spiritual are you?' This led to a discussion on the difference between the two. The group were then shown a talk by the psychologist Jonathan Haidt who is the author of 'The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion'. In The Righteous Mind, he answers some of the most compelling questions about human relationships. Why can it sometimes feel as though half the population is living in a different moral universe? Why do ideas such as 'fairness' and 'freedom' mean such different things to different people? Why is it so hard to see things from another viewpoint? Why do we come to blows over politics and religion?

Jonathan Haidt reveals that we often find it hard to get along because our minds are hardwired to be moralistic, judgmental and self-righteous. He explores how morality evolved to enable us to form communities, and how moral values are not just about justice and equality - for some people authority, sanctity or loyalty matter more. Morality binds and blinds, but, using his own research, Haidt proves it is possible to liberate ourselves from the disputes that divide good people.

11 people attended the first meeting. The second meeting in November was less successful because of technical and audio difficulties. This meant having to rush through a full agenda with two main topics. The first was a talk by Tracy Thompson on 'The Human Brain Hardwired for Spirituality'.

The theme of Tracy's talk was that God is great for your mental, physical, and spiritual health. This was based on new evidence culled from brain-scan studies, and a wide-reaching survey of people's religious and spiritual experiences. The second topic was on George Kelly's 'Personal Construct Psychology'. The idea of personal constructs psychology is the investigation of the uniqueness of each individual person to look at what kinds of meanings each individual person uses when looking at their own world of experiences and the meanings that individuals use to understand and make sense of these experiences. That's why it was called personal construct psychology because it investigates the constructs that are personal to each individual person in making sense and understanding their experiences. 14 people attended the session.

There was no session in December because it was so near to Christmas. The third meeting was therefore held in January of the New Year 2020. This session was led by April Hammond who was better qualified in presenting quite complex topics and making them accessible to the lay person. April's input allowed the session to flow more smoothly and ensured that everyone had space and time to make a contribution.

***Jennifer Boxall, Group Leader***

## **Science and Technology**

The group continues to flourish; we now have a slightly larger membership of 13. The meetings consist of viewing DVD's on The Joy of Science, Understanding the Inventions that Changed the World and some by Professor Brian Cox on The Universe and Cosmology. These embrace topics as wide ranging as the Laws of Physics, Quantum Physics, Cosmology and The Universe, Chemistry, Architecture, means of energy production, Transport, Gunpowder and many more. In short something for everyone.

It is worth stressing, so as not to put off potential new members that the subject matter is not too deep, those wishing to further explore can follow up in selected links and publications, often suggested by group members. We have free ranging discussion sessions during the breaks between DVD viewing, on a range of topics, often related to current issues, such as Climate Change, 'Renewable' methods of providing electricity and heat to our homes and powering vehicles. Some members attended lectures in the 'Pint of Science' series held annually in Cambridge, and elsewhere. It is hoped that, in future, now we are well established, that we organise some visits to sites/facilities of particular interest to the group - perhaps the National Space Centre.

***Gerry Willmott, Group Leader***

## **Scrabble and Snack**

Scrabble and snack has been running for upwards of 10 years now and continues to flourish. We currently have 16 people in the group which is about the maximum number I can accommodate. However, very rarely do we get a full house. While the majority are incredibly loyal, one or two people only attend occasionally. We meet at my house on the fourth Wednesday of each month and at Beryl Walton's house on the first Wednesday of the month most of the time. In the last year two new members have joined us.

Scrabble is a tactical game, the aim being to put down words that score highly, quite often using those oh-so-useful and often obscure two letter words. As far as I recall, the biggest score anyone has obtained for one word is 96, by our newest member on her first game with us recently.

We take it in turn to provide the snack (egg mayonnaise sandwiches being an absolute favourite), though Beryl currently always prepares the food for her sessions.

***Brenda Wyatt, Group Leader***

## **Short Mat Bowls**

We currently have a total of 17 fully paid up members of the bowls Group. At the beginning of 2019 we had 19 members. During the year one member retired due to health reasons and 2 others left to join other well known bowls clubs in the area in order to play more often.

During 2019, we held 9 bowls sessions ie, January to June and September to November. We do not play in the months of July, August and December. Each session last 2 hours with a 15 min break half way through.

The Group currently has 2 main bowling mats sufficient to cope with the present number of members. We also maintain a stock of 'spare' bowls for use by any of our current people as well as able to cope with U3A members who would like a 'taster'. Virtually all our equipment is fully used including the Bowls Mat Storage Unit which the Community Centre keeps safe in their Store Room.

Our Group's Monthly Fees has remained the same for many years and are £3 per Month. (Members pay 5 months in Advance = £15). The 50p taken for tea/Coffee breaks previously, has now been discontinued. Members pay for refreshments required direct into the Community Centre till.

We continue to run our Annual Bowls competition throughout the year with the winning team being presented with the Natalie Jolly Trophy at the Annual Short Mat Bowls Group Dinner held usually in February or March each year. We currently allow each of the four members of the winning team to retain it for 3 months. However, should March U3A have a 'Club Trophy Case' we would like it to be displayed there so that it can be seen by all U3A members new and old.

As to the future, our current members do not appear too keen to expand the Group or even perhaps to go and play another team either inside or outside the March area. We have been invited to go along to Whittlesey U3A Bowls Club to play one of their bowls teams in their new hall. Perhaps this could be organised later in the year if sufficient interest is given to travel to the venue.

In the meantime, our members are very content to play each other in the 4 teams we currently operate.

Obviously, we would welcome any new or old members of U3A who are interested in having a couple of hours in very sociable company and hopefully enjoy a little gentle exercise playing Bowls.

If you never played the game before don't worry, we can supply you with all the bowls, etc. and there are lots of us who will advise and help you along.

***Ron Hall, Group Leader***

## **Special Quilting**

The group meet on the first and third Thursdays of each month with the exception of August, when we generally have a break for the summer. Due to limitations of work space the group is limited to 20 members. The cost of the room hire is £80 per month and each member pays £5 per month. When the group is at full strength, this allows a modest residue of £20 which enables us to purchase equipment as required. Members pay their subscription whether they attend or not, to ensure that the group has a predictable income to cover costs. However, to avoid potential hardship, if someone knows that they cannot attend for reasons of health or family circumstances, we offer an option to suspend membership for up to 3 months without obligation to pay. If the absence is likely to extend beyond 3 months though, we suggest that members end their membership and re-join when they are in a position to attend again. To date the group has 17 members.

Currently all members are female, but male members would be offered a warm welcome, should they wish to join us. The group is open to all abilities, from absolute beginners to more experienced quilters who may be returning to the hobby. The only physical requirement is a pair of working hands and reasonable eyesight (although I'm sure that we current members vary with regard to this capacity, but we get by.) The room is on the ground floor and we would be happy to try to meet any requirements that prospective members might have. We have both gained and lost some members during the year for a variety of reasons. The most notable loss is that of Joyce Thorne who has run the group for approximately 10 years. Joyce is a very skilled quilter, who imparted her knowledge freely to the group and will be missed. However she is leaving us with a sound basis of skills which we will take forward. The Group would like to offer sincere THANKS to Joyce for the hard work that she put into the group for so long.

The group will now share skills amongst themselves rather than seek a new skills leader. Two experienced members will be leading the group for the next few months in creating a series of quilt blocks, which will ensure a sound basic knowledge base for both new and existing members. It is hoped that other members will also take a turn in leading specific sessions as the needs become clear later in the year. Joyce has also kindly offered to lead occasional one off sessions as required. We will of course allow her a period of rest before bothering her though.

There are a number of quilt shows and fabric sales throughout the coming year which may be of interest to members and it is hoped to try to use the FACT Bus service to enable small groups of members to attend. In the past we have each used our cars to attend, and this should prove to be a small step towards being more environmentally friendly as well as being rather more sociable.

It is hoped that all members will work towards producing a good selection of exhibits for the August show.

### ***Joan Manze, Group Leader***

## **Strollers**

Our group had a successful year again, with only two cancellations during the year. We were lucky to escape a lot of bad weather. (We cancel our walks when we have heavy rain or snow.)

There were a variety of destinations this year with some new ones we had not walked before. These were:

PIDLEY: (WHERE THEY HAVE A MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM!)

GODMANCHESTER: here we had an unpleasant experience with the pub we had booked for lunch.

HOLYWELL: a very surprising destination with lovely scenery

MEPAL: very rural, surprisingly quiet being so near the main road, with a wild landscape.

## **Strollers cont'd....**

DODDINGTON: very rural with unexpected animal farms.

Other destinations were;

Hinchingbrooke Park, Houghton, Brampton, Somersham, March.

Our numbers have diminished somewhat during the year so we would welcome new members to join us for a stroll and a sociable lunch to follow. We are usually away from March between the hours of 9.45a.m. & 3.00pm. Strolling and walking in general are a good all-round exercise to help keep us mobile as we get older. So what's stopping you?.....

***Joyce Thorne, Group Administrator***

## **Sweet Young Things**

We started the year with a trip out in February 2019 to Ayscoughfee Hall in Spalding, Lincolnshire, a charming Manor House & Museum with quite a picturesque garden. The weather was very kind to us and after a good lunch most of us enjoyed a sit outside in the sunshine, quite unusual for February.

We were going to the Market in St Ives in March but this had to be cancelled due to bad weather. Next we all were off to Newark-on-Trent, where we were treated to a guided tour of the main part of this civil war town, lunch and time for some shopping at the antique / boot sale.

In June we went to Stamford for the Food & Drink Festival, but on arrival we found that most of it had been washed out with the heavy rain and one of our group even had her purse stolen. Unfortunately this was not one of the better days out.

July was different, with a trip to The Lavender Fields and Hunstanton, when the weather was kind to us. We all enjoyed the trip around the fields in a mini bus and the guide telling us all about how the crop is grown and how they make it into Lavender Oil. We then went on by coach to Hunstanton where most of us had a good old Fish & Chip lunch and a walk along the front.

August saw some of us going to Rushden Lakes Shopping Centre in Northamptonshire for some retail therapy.

In October some of us went to the Outlet Centre at Springfields near Spalding in Lincolnshire for some pre-Christmas shopping especially at the Marks & Spencer Outlet Shop.

This year was my last year of leading the SYT, and as no one has come forward to replace me, I will not be doing any more trips out, but the monthly meeting with a buffet lunch will still carry on at The Ship Pub in March at 2pm on the last Thursday of the Month.

***Dorothy Hughes, Group Leader (retired)***

## **Table Tennis**

The group, now in its third year, has 23 members and an average attendance of 15 players per session.

Sessions are held on the second, fourth and fifth Mondays of the month in the main hall at the FE Centre. Three tables are available to ensure that members can play as much or little as they want.

The charge for each session is £3 which includes bats if required plus refreshments and takes place between 10.00am and noon.

New players of any ability are always welcome.

***Paul Bass, Group Leader***

## **Theatre Group**

2019 saw our Group continue to grow and thrive. Fourteen shows were attended throughout the year from Her Majesty's Theatre in London to our most frequented theatre in Milton Keynes. Membership, paid annually in March of each year, remained £2 per member and covers all administration costs: 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 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 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 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.

### **Shows attended in 2019 included:-**

Fame The Musical	Milton Keynes Theatre
The Band - Musical	Milton Keynes Theatre
A Taste of Honey - Play	Norwich Theatre Royal
Sleeping Beauty - Ballet	Nottingham Royal Concert Hall
Phantom of the Opera - Musical	London
Les Miserables - Musical	Milton Keynes Theatre
Saturday Night Fever - Musical	Milton Keynes Theatre
Girl on the Train - Play	Norwich Theatre Royal
Romeo & Juliet - Ballet	Wisbech Cinema filmed live from Royal Opera House
9 to 5 - Musical	Milton Keynes Theatre
Kinky Boots - Musical	With Chatteris U3A
Joseph and his Amazing	
Technicolour Dreamcoat - Musical	Milton Keynes Theatre
The Entertainer - Play	Milton Keynes Theatre
Don Quixote - Ballet	Wisbech Cinema filmed live from Royal Opera House

### **Shows Cancelled in 2019 due to lack of numbers wanting to attend:**

Shakespeare's Twelfth Night	Tolethorpe Hall
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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.

Eight shows have currently been booked for 2020 at Milton Keynes Theatre, Nottingham Royal Concert Hall, Norwich Theatre Royal and (new for us) Northampton Royal & Derngate Theatre - taking us up to October. More shows will be sourced and offered from the summer onwards and hopefully will satisfy all palettes from Musicals, to Ballet, to Opera. 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.

We have seen some of our trips enhanced by members from Chatteris U3A; which has sometimes ensured that the booking goes ahead and also means that we can travel by coach as against minibus. March U3A members always get priority knowledge of forthcoming shows so that we ensure visiting U3A members do not attend to the detriment of our own members. Our members are also offered seats with Chatteris U3A theatre trips if they have spaces to spare.

## **Theatre Group *cont'd....***

A Group meeting was held at the end of March at the Oliver Cromwell Hotel; giving members the opportunity to put forward their suggestions for future shows and to sign up for new offerings; as well as paying their £2 annual subscription. Although I have been advised that as the Group is now so large they cannot offer us a free room in 2020 - but I do not think currently it is necessary to have such a meeting any more as we are well established and members can talk to me at any of the U3A monthly meetings.

***Jill Osler, Group Leader***

## **Tin Whistle Group**

The Whistle Group continues to thrive, numbers steady at around the half dozen mark. Our repertoire of tunes is over 170, which embraces folk, traditional, classical and pop genres.

Sessions, which are fortnightly, allow a week in which to process the content of the previous session and a week to prepare tunes for the next. Playing solo on an instrument like a whistle/flageolet can be a testing challenge, as what sounds good in the safe confines of our homes can be daunting when public performance is required. Members are supportive and uncritical but are careful listeners, and pieces are then played as a 'band'.

A note-perfect rendition by a whiffle of whistlers is a most satisfying experience, especially for the players!

***Paddy McEvoy, Group Leader***

## **Understanding Art**

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

The evening group is just completing two courses, one is entitled, 'The World's Greatest Paintings', and the other has taken us on a tour of the New York Museum of Art.

The afternoon group has completed one course on Impressionists and nearing the end of another about Art of the Northern Renaissance.

The programme for the coming year will be arranged in consultation with the groups. Courses are shared between the groups. A new course available is a tour of The Louvre.

***David Boxall, Group Leader***

## **Walkers**

There are currently 33 members in the Walkers group. We meet on the third Friday of each month and aim to walk around 5- 6 miles, usually starting at a pub or cafe no more than 30 miles away from March. Most group members drive themselves to the pre-arranged starting point but lifts from a car park in the town can be arranged. A fuel contribution is then suggested.

We quite often have coffee just before the start of the walk, pre-order lunch and then return to the starting venue, usually a pub, to enjoy lunch together. We have a lovely, jolly time and always organise a Christmas meal following on from the December walk.

During 2019 we completed the following walks:

- A walk along the beach from Hunstanton to Holme next the Sea, lunch there and a walk back along the beach.
- A walk around Fen Drayton Lakes
- Brampton to Port Holme and Godmanchester

## **Walkers continued....**

- A walk from Godmanchester to Houghton Mill.
- Roydon Common
- Wansford area
- March - part of the Woodmans Way
- Wiggshall St Germans
- Shouldham
- Holywell and Needingworth
- Manea followed by Christmas lunch at the Golden Lion

The following 3 walks are planned for Jan, Feb and March 2020: Heacham to Hunstanton and return; Ferry Meadows and Sawtry.

Thirteen members of the group also enjoyed a successful five day walking holiday in Derbyshire during the first week of October, an experimental venture that we are likely to repeat in the future.

We are happy to welcome new members as not everybody attends each walk; the average group size is around 15 - 20, so there is room to accommodate a few more.

***Sharon and John Smith, Group Leaders***  
***Tel: 01354 279871***

## **Writing Support**

This newly formed group started late in 2019. Following committee approval, the first inaugural meeting of the group took place in March Community Centre on 26<sup>th</sup> September. It was chaired by Keith Jolly who after a brief introduction handed over to Jill Monck-Mason the new group leader.

A brief written summary of the aim of the group was handed out. It explained that it was not a creative writing group, but one which wanted to encourage both those who had written or wanted to write and those who had ideas about stories or family memoirs they wanted to discuss. There would be no restriction on the type of material, or indeed any pressure to actually write anything, but there would be discussion, suggestions and of course encouragement. Pieces of writing could be read aloud and feedback given in a relaxed and informal way.

A brief discussion about those aims followed and agreement that the meetings would take place on the last Thursday in the month, held in the group leader's home in Coldham. The meetings would be from 1.30pm to 4.30 pm; chosen because there is a bus from and to March which fits in roughly with those times; convenient for those who don't drive. Stella Snow also kindly offered her services to chauffeur a couple of members.

Since then there have been two meetings in October and November – the December one was cancelled due to the festive season. Those two meetings showed a great deal of promise for the future success of the group. They featured discussion regarding ideas for stories, some involving memoirs, family history, and others fiction of different genres. Members read work they had produced, all of excellent quality and interest. At both meetings the main aims of the group – support, feedback and encouragement – was emphasised and welcomed. We all agreed that self-discipline often needs something extra – encouragement from others.

Everyone said they had enjoyed the meetings and looked forward to continuing. 2020 is set to be a vibrant and successful year for the group's progress.

***Jill Monck-Mason , Group Leader***