

MARCH



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

ANNUAL REPORTS

APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019



LOTTERY FUNDED

**The Object of March U3A is :
MARCH U3A is a Registered Charity, Number 1172951**

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.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2018 has been a new venture for me taking on the position of Chairman of March U3A. Talk about going on a massive learning curve. However, with the support of fellow committee members I got there, although some comments that came from members were not always the most encouraging. This is a very thankless task but it is a job that has to be done.

The year has seen many new groups starting which is really encouraging. Well done to all the group leaders and especially any new group leaders. Also big thanks to all those members who host a group in their own home. This is an excellent way to meet and gives a much more relaxed and informal atmosphere.

Well done to the members of the committee and members that helped with the Christmas party. This seems to have been a big hit and everyone found the United Services Club a more spacious venue. A good afternoon was enjoyed by all those that came along.

As we came to the end of the year we have increased again in numbers and have just under 300 members. This is good but has given us problems for the monthly meetings. The committee have looked at the issues and for those that attend the meetings you will find only the talks will take place in the main hall. Refreshments will be from the serving hatch in the corridor. Notices and information will be in room 6 along with theatre group bookings. However from March this will improve because we are also arranging to use room 7 which will give us much more space.

So on reflection 2018 was a busy year but a good one with several new groups and an increase in members. Let's hope we can all get the time in 2019 to do all the activities we enjoy and learn along the way and increase our knowledge.

Alan Ward, Chairman

Vice Chairman's Corner

People wonder what the Vice Chairman does: generally speaking it is filling in for the Chairman. This year I have filled in by helping with the Christmas tree display, attending regional meetings and trying to liaise with the press locally. I write a short piece each month for the Citizen and Cambs Times which rarely makes the page. It must be the way I put things.

I enjoy this supporting role and see examples every month of members supporting each other to make the U3A work. Using the Christmas Tree as an example, the response from groups to the call for cards to display on it was magnificent, nearly every group made the effort. Some of the cards were very inventive and drew comments both from visitors to the Festival in St. Peter's Church and in the Library where they were displayed after the competition. Special thanks to Pam Fletcher who helped decorate the tree, George Crowther who helped take it down, John Smith who photographed it, and Julia Wright who made the crowning decoration and signage

The Book stall has also had a successful year and I am grateful to all those members who bring books and buy others. Money raised goes into the funds to help with social events. Every little helps and much more is raised by the sterling work of our raffle organisers, Marion and Paula, which is also helped by donations from members.

The remarkable generosity of our members is also seen in the lifts freely offered to others to make group attendance easier. Our capacity for enjoyment is also evidenced in the many group meals that take place over the Christmas season whether they are elegant teas or lunches. I've heard it said members enjoy the eating out as much as the group they attend.

Naturally over time we need to support each other in sad times: this year we have seen the deaths of three members: Natalie Jolly, who had been a long standing member of many groups and made us all laugh with her antics as the Christmas fairy died after a long illness. John Wyatt whose dry sense of humour was a feature of the film shows he edited was a keen walker and photographer also enjoying the Italian group which he led for a time. Jackie Browne was a skilled craftswoman: her house was an Aladdin's cave of craft materials and she was very generous if anyone ever needed anything. She had all sorts of materials and was a champion tele shopper. Jackie was also aware that people on their own could feel down on family occasions like Bank Holidays often inviting others to share a meal with her and her husband at these times. I know their partners have been thankful for the kindness of members at this time

Many members have celebrated special birthdays and wedding anniversaries this year, enjoyed trips to Sheringham and Bury St. Edmunds: it seems as if some group is always going somewhere! So long as we keep enjoying learning and sharing together March U3A will be a successful organization.

Lynda

TREASURER'S REPORT

The first change for this year was 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 had a healthy balance of £760. This account is mainly for the Christmas party. Funds are raised through the raffles held throughout the year.

This left our second Account unused so as new Treasurer I decided that I would move the monies that some groups pay into us to this account. This is used 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 which makes it much easier to manage.

The finances of the March U3A are approximately in a very similar position to a year ago, despite reducing monthly meeting fees to 50p, paying for the U3A magazine, along with the reduced £15 membership fee, all introduced last year. Good news indeed, but of course there are always price rises in the pipeline. The room rental costs at the Community Centre have risen for all the rooms in the centre but up till now as a main user we have not been affected so far. However any new rooms rented will be at the new prices. Currently we pay £960 per year for the Meeting Hall and Room 6.

We have, however, been asked to pay for the three storage cupboards we use and also the equipment we have stored there, i.e. bowls mats rack and table tennis tables. This will amount to £240 per year which is not unexpected and affordable. Another cost rise from next April will be for our administration system, Beacon, which will go up to £1 per head for current members - 295 at the moment. This is because this year the management costs have exceeded income. 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 U3As pay this to support the Head office and Networks and the facilities it provides. If you belong to more than one U3A you only pay this at your main U3A.

David Rapetti has arranged a variety of speakers over the past year which will cost around £1100 by the end of this financial year. Speaker costs have risen as we would expect, but most have been well received and good value so many thanks to David.

During the year we have supported groups with requests for equipment from the Bridge Group, DVD box sets for the History Group, and the new Geography Group. The new Classical Music Group also received support and the Country Dancing group for room hire. These groups normally finance them selves 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, but if you 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 support our Christmas Party, presentations and Welfare.

Overall our U3A is running smoothly with the money in the accounts 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 nearly 265 of our 295 membership having email addresses. Beacon is constantly being improved, with some bugs being sorted out, but with well over 280 U3A's using the system it is proving its worth.

However the running of the Beacon System has been taken over by the Third Age Trust who say the management costs have significantly exceeded income this year. This is due to the costs of the specialist software company in addressing bugs and enhancements and the employment of a staff member to alleviate the workload on the lead volunteers. This means of course that our costs will rise in April to £1 per head, for each of our current members. This is still very reasonable I think and our committee agrees.

The Third Age Trust have also appointed an external consultant to advise on “Beacon - the way forward” who has advised them that to provide functions which U3As will increasingly request, the cost of continuing with our system would not be without unacceptable significant cost.

Therefore the Trust plan to replace Beacon with “Beacon 2”. Against this background, the The Third Age Trust Board took the decision to replace Beacon with a commercially sourced “Beacon 2” which will provide everything we have now ,plus additional functionality. They are forming a Working Group this January to advise the Trust on implementation of the new Beacon 2, and the transferring of data to Beacon 2. all to be done by October 2020. There will be a lot more to come on this story I think!!

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 too quickly. We had several members this year with broken bones and sadly we lost quite a few, they will be missed.

My aim in U3A welfare is to talk and listen to people, help them if they need it and visit if they want me to.

Up to date I have sent 11 cards, flowers and chocolates, four home visits and numerous phone calls.

G (Trudi) Davies, Welfare Officer

GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

It has been a busy year starting with a second Garden Group, Garden Group 2, led by Sue Robinson to cater for those who couldn't join the original because it was at capacity. This is always a problem with any "home" group that has run out of space to take new members.

Country Dancing took off at the same time (and needs some more members so as to afford their room hire costs).

Then a couple of new "technical" groups fired up under the leadership of new member Gerry Willmott, Model Engineering and Science and Technology - I have great hopes for these, I've even joined one!

We also have the new, "all member" Cinema group, which aims to help with reduced prices for tickets, assist with transport and find pals for those who prefer not to go alone.

The latest group to be formed is Music from the Musicals under Trish Vink. They meet monthly at her home, listen to and enjoy their favourites, talk and learn about the artists composers and publishers.

Ten Pin Bowling is quite popular and so far has involved both Grumpies and Sweeties competing with each other. We believe there are more players out there among all our groups, so would like to set up an annual league with each group entering a team - we just need someone to set up the mechanics of it and see it through! I will persuade the committee to provide a suitable trophy of course.

Remember that if there is a group that you would like to join but can't because the meeting date is unsuitable, or it's oversubscribed, do let me know and I will try to find a solution. Likewise, if what you fancy isn't on our long list of groups, tell me and we'll see if we can get another group going. This doesn't mean that you have to be the group leader by the way.

I'm at most monthly meetings, or you can contact me via the website, ring 01354 677237 or email k.jolly270@btinternet.com .

**Keith Jolly,
Groups Coordinator**

GROUPS ANNUAL REPORTS

Armchair Travel

This new group meets on the third Wednesday of the month in the afternoon to enjoy 'Armchair Travel'. Unfortunately some have to travel on upright chairs! We have taken train journeys to Norway, Finland and Switzerland and visited Antarctica and Barcelona. We have watched films from the 'Great Geographical Wonders' DVD which includes features on Ayers Rock and Vietnam.

David Boxall, Group Leader

Birdwatching

It has been another year of good days out looking at our lovely bird population and visiting some of our favourite locations.

In June this year we identified 70 species at the RSPB Reserve at Titchwell, a record for us. Titchwell is usually our most successful day out but that was exceptional.

Although we do occasionally cancel our days out because of bad weather forecasts, this year for the first time one of the days out was cancelled because the forecast temperature was of a possible 37 degrees. It was certainly too hot for us humans.

We have maintained a good level of membership although some of our members have been missing for a while due to health reasons, but are hoping to start again in the Spring. We look forward to welcoming them back. We also welcome any potential new members who would like to have a taster. We meet once a month, on the fourth Friday.

Margaret Lloyd, Group Leader

Board Games

We have had another very pleasant year of friendly rivalry and banter at our monthly meetings. We are still meeting at my home once a month on the third Wednesday of the month from 2pm.

We have about 10-12 members who attend on a regular basis but there is always room for more. If anyone is interested in joining us they would be most welcome.

Rummikub remains the favourite game, but there is a good choice of alternative games if you wish to play something else. Tea, coffee and cakes are served at a small charge of 50p to cover the cost.

Joan Perring, Group Leader

Bridge

Bridge club has had a successful year. Our weekly sessions include social chit chat as well as Bridge. We have grown from two tables to three, which means we can accommodate 12 people. Our present membership is 11 so if there are any Bridge players out there do contact me. My email address is mickygrobinson@gmail.com We meet each week on Tuesday afternoons.

Michael Robinson, Group Leader

Card Making

We have had our usual eleven craft meetings during the year. We also met for coffee at The Oliver Cromwell Hotel in December. It was here that we exchanged and admired our hand-crafted Christmas cards and discussed the various methods that we had used. Six members of the group went to the Crafting Live Exhibition in October at the Peterborough Show Ground where we had a very enjoyable day stocking up with card, dies and other essentials. We were very grateful to Christine for once again being our chauffeur.

Sadly, this year we lost one of our original members, Jackie Browne. Jackie joined us in February 2012, just two months after the start of the group and regularly attended meetings over the past six years. She also acted as 'Leader' and hosted a meeting at least once a year. She was interested in all areas of craft and had considerable knowledge and experience which she was happy to share. Jackie was a quick worker and usually the first to complete her card. I tried very hard to ensure that there was sufficient work for her to do, to keep her busy for two hours, but I frequently failed. She will be sadly missed.

Julia Wright, Group Leader

Classical Music Appreciation

Two groups are now established, each meeting monthly in our home. The groups have slightly different programmes. Group 1 watches a DVD about classical music in the first half with a selection of music in the second half. Group 2 listens to music both before and after the refreshment break, with an introduction to give a background to the music.

David Boxall, Group Leader

Classic Film

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, 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 our 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 continue putting the DVD into the player in anticipation of some stirring times ahead, to lose ourselves in, to perhaps make us see things more clearly, 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 we are presented with.

Carol Jones, Group Leader

Computer Clinic

Have a laugh and learn more about your Windows Computer and Android Phone. This 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.

Members share IT issues and solutions. Does anyone know...?, well someone else may have the same problem and someone else may know the answer. For example-

“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 speed up my slow running computer”

Members share and demonstrate favourite websites or software. 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! Come along and give us a try.

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

For- Lance Woollard Group Leader

Country Dancing

This is a new group for 2018. This is a small but enthusiastic group who are remembering dances they last performed at school, which for most of us was a long time ago! Elements of Line Dancing have been introduced, led by Pat Frost and we continue to perform with lively action (if not entirely in time with the music). We do need more dancers because we need a large space for the activity and this has to be paid for. The more of us there are the more fun we can have. We especially welcome men, because without them some of us forget we are supposed to be dancing that role and go round the wrong way! Everyone is welcome at our meetings on Saturday afternoons. Wear something comfortable, bring a drink, a sense of humour and join us in the Gay Gordons.

Lynda Andrews, Group Leader

Craft

The Craft group continues to meet each Tuesday: this year we have made many things some of which were displayed at the August meeting. Jewellery making, tapestry, knitting, sewing and quilting, toy repairs, all sorts of projects. The group is never boring and has resulted in fabric buying trips and outings which group members arrange for themselves. We enjoyed a Christmas tea at the Oliver Cromwell in December, sadly without a long-term member, Jackie Brown, who died in November. Jackie was a great craftswoman: her house is full of things she had made and she was happy to share her skills with the group. We were delighted when Mel, her husband, came to see us just before Christmas, bringing cards and gifts Jackie had ordered and prepared ready for Christmas. We all attended her funeral and some wore hats as she had wished.

This is a friendly group and new members are always welcome to join. We often have people drop in just to see what we are up to. We always have nice biscuits and serve tea or coffee around 3pm. Come along any Tuesday afternoon and see us at work.

Lynda Andrews, Group Leader

Creative Writing

The Group consists of nine members who meet on the third Wednesday of each month between 2:30 pm and 4:30pm usually at the home of myself as Group Leader. There is no fee for being a member and due to such small numbers the Group Leader has 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:-

- Choices
- Something Nice
- The Ironing Board
- Collections
- Tools For Survival:
(Creativity/Empathy/Intuition/Resilience)
- An Unexpected Event
- Members Choice of Subject
- Unlikely Relationships
- Trees
- Tractors
- For Hire
- Social Christmas Gathering of Members

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)

The Cribbage Group has continued to thrive over the past year, regularly meeting every second and fourth Monday afternoon. We generally play for about 2 hours in the back room of The Ship public house on Nene Parade. We have lost some members this year but also gained a few. Currently we have 18 registered, although the attendance is usually between 8 and 12. The Group has also enjoyed some social events, namely two lunches and an afternoon tea. I have only recently taken over the Group due to the incapacitation of Mike Chapman, the previous leader. We thank him for his work for the Group since he started it 2 years ago. New members are welcome and lessons can be given if you wish to learn the game.

Colin Head, Acting Group Leader

Digital Photography

We have 14 members at the start of 2019 and we meet in room 7 at the Community Centre on the first Thursday of the month unless we have arranged a trip.

In 2018 we had five field trips out to the following;

March.	Wisbech Town Walk
April.	Ayscoughfee Hall & Gardens
June.	Gooderstone Water Gardens
September.	Nene Valley Railway
October.	Burghley Park & Gardens

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. In our meetings we watch DVDs, welcome members of different faiths to talk with us and share our own research. Sylvia Palmer has assisted with the leadership of the group, especially while I was recovering from a hip operation.

The group has visited the Shree Hindu temple in Leicester and the Beth Shalom Reform Synagogue in Cambridge. Members of the Bahai Faith, based in Ely, visited the group to explain about their beliefs. We plan to continue to explore a wide range of faiths with our emphasis in the first part of the year on Christianity.

Jen Boxall, Group Leader

Family History

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

At the present time the group has six members but recently others have expressed an interest in attending. 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

This group started recently and has had several outings. The idea is to find someone to go to the cinema with, to share cars and have a good time together, much better than going alone. We have seen 'Mamma Mia', Bohemian Rhapsody, and 'Peterloo', among other films. The main problem seems to be driving at night as many of us prefer not to do this. However, even if demand is small we will try to make sure those who want to see something but have no transport, can enjoy the best in modern cinema. Let's see what 2019 turns out in terms of epics.

Lynda Andrews, Group Leader

Gardening Group 1

I'm into my fourth year as Leader of the Group with a full house of 16 members, any more and they will be sitting on the floor! We obviously all have established gardens with some of the members growing vegetables, swapping seeds, plants and tips throughout the year.

This year has been quite busy with a visit in May to Waterside Gardens at Baston, a large garden centre under cover with a good restaurant, which was ideal as the weather was quite wet that day. In July we travelled by mini bus to Barnsdale Gardens in Rutland where we had a great day with perfect weather. There was also an excellent restaurant on site. In October the members visited the Van Hage Garden Centre near Peterborough arriving in time for breakfast or an early lunch.

We finished the year by having our Christmas meal which was at the Wheel in Wisbech St. Mary which everybody enjoyed.

Jean Howes, Group Leader

Gardening Group 2

We are called Garden Group 2 and meet every second Monday of the month at 2pm. Our aim is to procure seeds from last years dead flora and grow them this year into beautiful flowers or a hardy biennial for the following year. We also take rose and shrub cuttings which when they have taken, we exchange amongst our members. We also have an outing booked to Ryston Hall to see the Snowdrops, knowing that soon we will be heralding the spring .

Sue Robinson, Group Leader

Geography

At the start of the year there were two groups –an afternoon group and an evening group. Both groups met monthly at our home to watch and discuss DVD courses based on aspects of Geography. The evening group was learning about 'Geological Wonders' and visiting 'Medieval Cities'. However this group has now changed to an afternoon group, with several new members and is called 'Armchair Travel'.

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

David Boxall, Group Leader

Grumpy Old Men

We now have 42 members in the Grumpy Old Men Group of whom 26 are regular participants. During 2018 there was an average of 13 people on each of the 10 visits completed, the lowest being 7 and the highest 20.

Visits and trips were made to the following places:

- Ten Pin Bowling at Guyhirn
- Greyhound Racing at Peterborough (twice)
- The English Spirit Distillery at Great Yeldham in Essex
- RAF Duxford Aircraft Museums
- Canal Boat trip to Outwell
- Birds of Prey Centre in Bedford
- Gordon Easton Museum at Coates
- The RAF Radar Museum at Neatishead near Norwich
- and we ended up at the Ship public house during December for our Xmas buffet.

The Grumpies either travel to these visits in their own cars, as passengers in fellow members' cars, or by the FACT Bus which we used on three occasions.

We are a thriving male only group who meet monthly at a local public house with a view to making friends and identifying and organising trips to places of male interest.

These trips will generally have a strong educational bias towards technology, natural history and anything within reason where there is sufficient interest.

We welcome new members or potential members who come along for a tester.

John Smith, Group Leader

Health Walks

Our Group is into its 10th year. A few of us have weathered the years very well until this last year, but we keep going! We meet every Monday morning at the car park behind the Iceland Store. The walk starts at 10 am prompt and lasts between 45 minutes and 1 hour.

Our routes are around March - eg Silt Road, West End, Nene Parade, Riversides, Barker's Lane, plus of course, 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 10 to 16. We have 16 members in the group. After the walk we meet in Wetherspoons for coffee and a chat. Some members meet for lunch around Christmas time

Rose Morrisey, Group Leader

History - Group 1

We have taken a break from watching the "Great Courses" series of videos on "A History of England from the Tudors to the Stuarts". Instead, we have started watching "The Early Middle Ages" (also in the "Great Courses" series). We are continuing to watch "Ancient Greek Civilisation" at the same monthly meetings. We meet on a Tuesday afternoon on the first week of the month.

Alan Burdass, Group Leader

History - Group 2

We have been watching two lectures on the Tudors and the Stuarts every month for the last year and expect to reach the end of this history period later this year. Attendance has been a little patchy at times due to other commitments. We meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month on Tuesday afternoons

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

This small enthusiastic group consisting of five or six people continue to meet every Saturday afternoon at 2pm in March Library. At the moment we are using a computer course, but we also make use of several different books. We are fortunate that one of our members is from Germany and she is patiently guiding us through German grammar.

Two of us recently had a holiday in Germany and were pleased that we could converse with the locals. We were able to order food, ask directions and shop.

Margaret Cumming, Group Leader

Spanish

The group continues to meet on a Wednesday mornings in the town library once a fortnight. There is a mixture of conversational and written Spanish.

The atmosphere is friendly and informal with no targets or pressure. We are slowly but steadily improving the standard of our Spanish

Norman Kay, Group Leader

Turkish

This group is currently in abeyance.

Heather Ballard

Learn to love Jazz

We look at all aspects of Jazz including swing and big band music. We have seven members which is an increase of one since last report.

We visited the Braza Club in March for an enjoyable evening on the 4th January of mainly music from Louis Armstrong.

We welcome any new members and feel free to contact me if you are experiencing transport or other problems.

Mike Manze, Group Leader

Mah Jong

MAHJONG, what is it you ask? It is a game started in China goodness knows how many years ago and seems to be getting more popular in this country. It is a game played by three or four players playing with tiles with three different suits and dragons and winds.

It is quite hard to describe and I always recommend that if you want to learn to play it's far better to come along to a quiet game and observe, when I am sure you would soon pick it up.

We play every Friday in different houses with up to sixteen plus players, some playing in two different houses at the same time depending on how much room there is. We have a stop in between games for refreshments for which we put a pound in the pot for the host.

If anyone is interested in learning or would like to join I can be contacted through the website or at a monthly meeting.

Beryl Walton, Group Leader

Model Engineering

This Group was formed in late 2018 and has held two sessions to date. Current membership stands at six. With this size of membership we have agreed to hold the monthly sessions in members' houses on a rotational basis.

To date we have presented examples of individuals modelling work and discussed various aspects and techniques; for example computer control of model trains and radio control of train operation. Whilst the group's core interest is focused on model railways of various gauges, both internal and in the garden, we have a lady member whose interest lies in the construction and fitting out of dolls houses and we welcome anyone who has modelling/model engineering interests.

Two members attended a Model Railway exhibition in Peterborough and it is hoped, in the future, other visits involving more members will be undertaken.

Gerry Willmott, Group Leader

Model Making

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

for Rosemary Lea, 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 Alls 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. We have had a barbecue for the last two years and I will be looking for someone else to host one for 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 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 eight members who meet on the first Tuesday of each month at 10.30am. The meetings are usually held at the home of myself as Group Leader. We have seen one member leave the U3A due to ill health and one new member join the group. 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. They can also be poems written by the members themselves. The Group take it in turn to read aloud their poems of choice and comment accordingly if necessary. Subjects have ranged from:

- Poets whose surname starts with the letters P, Q, R or S
- Poets whose surname starts with the letters T, U or V
- Poets whose surname starts with the letters W, X, Y or Z
- Pot Luck (members free choice)
- Dreams
- Emotions
- Seasons
- Animals
- Trees
- War
- 'Anything that makes you happy'

Poetry Appreciation (cont'd)

In June the Group made a visit to John Clare's cottage at Helpston (near Peterborough) which included the option of a lunch at the nearby pub. Transport was via the FACT minibus.

Throughout the year a few monthly meetings were held at other members homes and it was agreed that in 2019 this would continue.

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 2019 then perhaps they would like a 'taster' as well; although there is a maximum number of members to keep it practicable. All they need to do is contact myself as Group Leader.

Jill Osler, Group Leader

Practical Art

We had eleven meetings and tackled a range of different subjects. They included silver and glass objects, skies, copying photographs, springtime, people, rockery and stone, rainy days, clowns, trains and winter scenes.

We are a small and very friendly group with different abilities. In the past year I think we have all found the meetings very enjoyable as well as informative. We have helped each other with problems gaining a better understanding of how to paint and draw. We have a small library of art books which can be borrowed and taken home.

At each meeting we choose between us a subject for the next meeting. This is not compulsory of course and members can choose their own subjects.

The August display was once again a great success with many encouraging comments from the U3A members.

We meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month in the Community Centre, Station Road at 10am - 12 noon. We meet in Room 2 which is light and airy with plenty of room for new members. At the moment subscription for hire of the room is £2.50 per meeting paid in advance every three or four months. Coffee, tea and biscuits are 50p.

We would love to have some new members, so why not come along to our next meeting for a free taster session to see if it is for you.

Ann Smith, Administrator

Science and Technology

This group is yet to have its first meeting, scheduled for January. The current membership is about 10. The format of this group will no doubt evolve as members interests become clearer, but initially the sessions will use instructional videos on a variety of topics to both educate and stimulate discussions. It is expected that in future visits will be organised to appropriate events, lectures and museums/collections.

Gerry Willmott, Group Leader

Scrabble and Snack

I think this is the ninth year of the Scrabble group and it shows no sign of running out of steam. I asked for comments from the group for this report and the consensus is that the members all find it very enjoyable. The combination of Scrabble and Snack seems to be a winning formula. We meet at lunchtime and have time to socialise while eating the snack before getting down to the serious business of playing Scrabble, when it goes quiet as people concentrate on their next move.

We take it in turn to provide the snack but don't expect new members to do so until they have settled comfortably into the group.

There is space for one or two new members. People who are considering joining often worry about their level of expertise. Please don't. We are a very relaxed group.

We continue to have two Wednesday lunchtime sessions a month, one at my house and the other hosted by Beryl Walton.

Brenda Wyatt, Group Leader

Short Mat Bowls

We currently have a group of 19 members. At the beginning of 2018 we had 17 members, 3 of whom were unable to attend due to ill health. During the year we had 5 new members making our full compliment of 19.

During 2018 we held a total of 9 bowls sessions which took place on the third Monday of the months January to June and September to November in the March Community Centre. The other three months namely July, August and December were periods when members had many other commitments and no bowls sessions were held.

At present we have two main bowling mats which is sufficient to cope with the current number of group members. We have purchased an additional number of smaller weighted bowls to provide our lady members with lighter woods. Unless we can obtain more space and the money to buy another mat then we are not able to take on further members. However, we have sufficient spare stock of bowls to cope with people who would like to attend as a taster but would unfortunately have to be put on a waiting list at this time. We make good use of the two mat storage roller machines with two handles to make it easier for us elderly people to combine our efforts when storing our mats away.

Our monthly fees are £3 per month. Members pay £15 in advance for 5 months play. The only other cost is 50p for tea or coffee.

A competition is currently being held between all members of the group, A number of teams have been set up and players remain in the same team throughout the competition. At the end of the year a trophy is presented to the winning team at the Annual Short Mat Bowls dinner held in February. Other prizewinning events may also be held.

We are an easy and enjoyable group who spend a couple of hours in good company with gentle exercise and friendly competition.

Ron Hall, Group Leader

Special Quilting

We have had a very busy year with some new ideas brought to fruition. To get our group interested I challenged them to get out of their comfort zone and showed them how to do Foundation Piecing. After a few attempts the group decided it was a very good way of making difficult blocks, especially those needing sharp points, such as stars. Success!

Currently we are working on the different configurations of the Log Cabin block, a very diverse pattern.

Earlier in the year we made another quilt to be raffled in August at our annual exhibition. We raised a disappointing amount of money this time, so need to assess if this is really worth the time and effort that goes into the making of this item. The quilt was won by Beverley, who was highly delighted. Second prize was a throw, won by David; third prize, a table-runner, was won by Julia.

Currently we have 17 members, which keeps us pretty busy with a variety of items being constructed by all.

At the end of the year I gave up being the Group Leader as I found it was time someone else took charge. I have been asked by the members to continue with the teaching aspect, to which I have agreed. A new Leader has not yet materialised.

Joyce Thorne, Group Leader

Strollers

We had another successful year with several walks which were new to our group.

Amongst these were:

- The Bluebell Wood at Thorpe Wood
- Helpston
- Nassington
- St.Ives

Every single one was successful, we did not lose anybody on the way!

Many thanks are due to our leaders of each month namely:-

- Jim and Rosemary Coote
- Ross and Gill Gentle
- Ann Smith
- Patricia Merrett
- Sue Robinson
- Brian and Margaret Henderson –
- John and Sharon Smith and other helpers.

Without monthly leaders we would not be able to function. So please do your share to keep this group going, by doing a recce and finding a venue for lunch. We finished the year with 44 members.

Joyce Thorne, Group Administrator

Sweet Young Things

We have had a busy year starting as always with my holiday in Spain for the whole of January Ha Ha!! Sandi Henderson took over as Group Leader, and organised a great trip on the River Trent starting at Nottingham with a lovely buffet lunch and cream tea enjoyed by all. Unfortunately due to ill health she had to stand down and I resumed the post of Group Leader in July.

We have had many enjoyable days out beginning with a Trip to Nottingham with a guided tour of the City Centre and a visit to the oldest Pub in England. Next was a trip to Leicester to visit the Cathedral and a tour including the Tomb of Richard the Third. This trip was really enjoyed by all the ladies. Then a good trip to the new shopping centre at Rushden Lakes for Christmas shopping. Unfortunately the weather was not kind to us that day but we managed to dodge from one shop to another without getting too cold or wet. We ended the year with a few of the ladies having a enjoyable evening out at the Chinese restaurant in March.

I have arranged three trips for this year already, so hopefully the group will carry on expanding with new members joining all the time. We still meet every month at The Ship Public House in March on the last Thursday of the Month at 2pm and usually about 20 to 35 ladies come along for some food and good old gossip. The dues are £1.00. Any new members will be very welcome, it is a good way to make new friends. This group is self funding and I try to keep trips out to under, or about, £25.00 per person. I am usually at the U3A Members Meeting in Room Six. If anyone is interested in joining my group please speak to me then, or you can contact me at dorothy.hughes2@btopenworld.com.

Dorothy Hughes, Group Leader

Table Tennis

The group, now in its second year, has 18 members and an average attendance of 13 players per session.

Sessions are held on the second and fourth Mondays of the month and in the last year we have moved into the Main Hall at the Community Centre. Three tables are now available, allowing more table time for all players.

The charge for each session is £3 which includes equipment and refreshments and takes place between 10 am and noon. New players of any ability are always welcome.

Paul Bass, Group Leader

Theatre Group

2018 saw our group grow to a membership in excess of 100. Eight shows were attended throughout the year from the Palladium in London to our most frequented theatre in Milton Keynes. Membership, paid annually in March of each year, remains at £2 per member and covers all administration costs over that year which are quite extensive.

We continue to attend a diverse mix of theatre entertainments.

New members are always welcome, membership is not conditional on how many shows members attend. However, as we are a group, there is a minimum number of interested persons required 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 2018 included:-

Beautiful	Milton Keynes Theatre
Crazy For You	Milton Keynes Theatre
Jersey Boys	Milton Keynes Theatre

Theatre Group (cont'd)

The King & I	London Palladium
Little Mermaid Ballet	Milton Keynes Theatre
Matilda	Milton Keynes Theatre
Nativity	Milton Keynes Theatre
War Horse	Milton Keynes Theatre

Shows cancelled in 2018 due to lack of numbers wanting to attend:

Fat Friends	Milton Keynes Theatre
Cambridge Shakespeare Festival	Cambridge College Gardens

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.

Five Shows have currently been booked for 2019 at Milton Keynes Theatre and The Royal Concert Hall in Nottingham taking us up to June. These are already fully booked and paid for. More shows will be sourced and offered from the Summer onwards and hopefully will satisfy all palates 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 leadtimes 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 rather than 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.

Group meetings are held in March and (sometimes) June 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. If shows are not booked to the end of the year there is also a meeting in September.

Jill Osler, Group Leader

Tin Whistle Group

We have had a tootlingly wonderful year, culminating in our first public performance at the U3A Christmas dinner to general acclaim. More to come?

The progress made has been quite remarkable. For people who hadn't played a lowly tin/plastic whistle not much over a year ago, the amount of ground covered has been impressive. What looks, to the uninitiated, like a simple instrument has hidden layers of complexity, requiring manual dexterity, breath control, aural acuity, memory challenges.....in fact a total neural work-out. And the musicians – all of whom have persevered - are such good company.

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 watching two 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.

The afternoon group is watching one course on Impressionists and another about Art of the Northern Renaissance.

David Boxall, Group Leader

Walkers

There are now 34 members of the Walkers group of whom about 24 are regular participants. During 2018 there was an average of 15 walkers on each of the 10 walks completed. The lowest number was 13 and the highest was 22. Destinations of the walks were:

- Ramsey,
- Abbott's Ripton,
- Belsize Wood in Breton,
- Holywell,
- Grafham Water,
- Stilton,
- Water Newton,
- Doddington,
- Stretham
- Buckden.
-

We walk on the third Friday of each month. We normally try to travel no further than 30 miles to the start of our walks and generally walk between five and six miles. We start at a pub where possible so that we can use the toilet before setting out, have a coffee if available and sometimes to pre-book our meals. We then return to the pub and have a nice lunch together. A lot of our walkers make their own way to the start of the walks but shared lifts from March can be, and are, arranged.

We are a friendly group, of varying ability and we have a lot of fun on our walks. We are currently considering going away for a few days for a walking break, a possible new venture for the group. We are open to accepting new members or come along for a taster

Sharon and John Smith, Group Leaders

Who do you think you are?

I don't hold a group meeting but I help anyone who wants to look into their family history.

Valerie Gobie, Group Leader