

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

March

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Registered Charity Number 1172951

MARCH CAMBS

ANNUAL REPORTS

APRIL 2020 – OCTOBER 2021



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

CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

Where to start with my first report as Chairperson of March u3a

I was elected in July 2020 after holding an online AGM. Little did I know what I was letting myself in for. We managed to get some new blood into the committee, and I thank Dave Walton Treasurer, Jan Grayson Secretary, Steve and Janet Hoskyns membership Secretary's, Wendy Gardiner Welfare Officer, Keith Jolly Group Co-ordinator, and David Repetti committee member for their help and contribution during a difficult time. Steve has taken on some of the Beacon work with Dave's help. Sadly, our previous Secretary Julia Lewis passed away after a long fight with Cancer and is sadly missed

We managed a few face-to-face committee meetings, before the second lock down came. We tried to make plans; little did we know how long it would be before we could meet up again. Hopefully by the time you read my report we will be back to normal, however in my opinion it will be a different normal. One of the biggest challenges has been to find a suitable venue for our monthly meetings. We looked at many possibilities. Prior to lock down we were reaching capacity at the FE Centre. The FE centre announced big changes to the building, unfortunately communication has been exceedingly difficult, In the meantime, we decided to try the Braza Club in March. We appreciate the venue is not everyone's choice.

It is also like we must start from scratch and some things may be trial and error.

On this point Keith Jolly and David Repetti are standing down from the committee. We need people to come forward and join our committee. Without a committee there would be no March u3a.

As for myself when no one put their name forward as Chairperson, and because the u3a helped me through some difficult times, I volunteered, I would hate to see it close, When I joined about eight years ago, I never thought I would be in the position of Chairperson

We had our first informal meeting in September, this was held at the Braza club, and the committee were very pleased at the turnout. Nearly 100 people attended. Thanks to Jan who organized the afternoon tea. We received many positive comments about the event

During the year I have tried to answer all emails, particularly regarding the start-up meeting. I am sorry if I have missed anyone out.

It has not been easy particularly in the last few weeks. Please remember the committee are all volunteers and its so easy to criticize, we are not perfect, and we must follow the u3a constitution and abide by the Charity Commission. Unfortunately, our Secretary will be standing down which is very sad as she has been an outstanding member of our Committee. We will be very sorry to see her go.

I am pleased to say most groups are up and running, again new venues had to be found. Again, thank you, to group leaders who kept their groups going and kept in touch with their members. unfortunately, some will not be restarting

Dave, Steve, Janet and, I attended a zoom meeting regards the start up of meetings by the Third Age Trust. We all agreed it was not a great help to us, and on that note, information from the Third Age Trust has been not very forthcoming. To the future as I said previously its going to be baby steps, a bit of trial and error.

Life is precious and we do not know what is round the corner let's hope we do not have another lock down.

Pauline Horton (Chairperson)

TREASURERS REPORT

March 1st 2020 – Feb 28th 2021

Who could have guessed what was to befall us at the start of 2020 and how it would effect our u3a. Despite the Covid virus and the F.E. Centre asking us to leave so they could refurbish the centre, almost 300 of you still joined us as members, but it still turned out to be a disastrous year for March u3a when hardly any activities were able to operate.

Because of this the committee decided that all who had paid for that year should have a free membership for this year. Not that this year has looked much better. The Third Age Trust of course were still keen to have the capitation payment of £3.50 per member, and the administration system costs us a £1 per head even though we have all been locked down.

Because of the lack of membership fee's for this year, we will use our reserve money to get us through this year, and we should be OK, to pay for room hires and speakers up until the next membership year with careful management, and perhaps now we will be able to get things started up again. Fingers crossed!

As I previously said we had to leave the Community Centre as it was to be refurbished and nearly all our equipment had to be removed whilst this went on. We were allowed to continue to store certain larger items belonging to two of our groups in the centre and they said they would take care of them. However certain items have gone missing. This will have to be resolved.

As for Main meetings we had pretty much outgrown the Community Centre so we will be using the Braza Club which is much bigger and costs are very similar. The Community Centre is finally to reopen in September and we will, we are told, be sent forms to apply for room hire with a risk assessment attached. We hope our two groups will be accepted back, but we as yet have no idea of cost. We do now have Speakers Booked from September onwards, at the Braza club, and we hope it will be possible to start running our March u3a monthly meetings again.

There is of course with prices rising for room hires and Speakers the probability that our membership fee may have to increase for next year. You will be asked at the AGM in October to vote on this as required.

If you have any questions about our financial position, I will be pleased to answer these if possible.

Dave Walton (Treasurer)

GROUPS CO-ORDINATOR

To say that the last year has been difficult for our groups would be a wild under exaggeration. It was not just because of the pandemic, it was also the plethora of seemingly ever-changing government rules aimed to keep us safe, it has been the concern of members about getting vaccinated, it was also the refurbishment work being done to the Community Centre where some of our more active groups met. This work has only now been completed so several groups have not met for more than a year. But Table Tennis and Practical Art will be meeting there quite soon. Groups meeting in members homes have all been affected in some way.

But March u3a are a resourceful bunch and we saw many of our groups meeting outside or changing their meeting habits by dividing the group into smaller sections and meeting in more than one venue more often, some are using Zoom or similar online systems and understandably, some group leaders have been reluctant to get started, finding it difficult to fully comply with the guidelines and the current increasing rate of infections.

Sadly, the Short Mat Bowls group is now inactive partly because of increased room hire fees and a reduction in members. The Classic Film group was about to fold but has been rescued by a couple of its

members and will be using a new venue. The Bridge group now has many members playing online, but we hope to have one table of four playing with real cards and real people very soon. New Covid free venues have been found for the Boules group and for Cribbage and both groups are meeting. All three Walking groups are currently meeting, despite one of their leaders being stuck in New Zealand as Covid 19 arrived and affected flights back home.

I will say a big thankyou to group leaders and assure all members that March u3a is continuing its efforts to have groups meeting again, perhaps not quite as before, but somehow in the new “normal”.

Keith Jolly March u3a Groups Coordinator

WELFARE

Since taken over Welfare in 2020, Covid has raised its ugly head, so due to that emails were sent monthly to members as we could not meet.

Very few deaths and none to Covid as far as I know.

I keep a check on ongoing illnesses that members have.

Jean Rapetti who has been given the all clear after going through chemo treatment

Leon Duncan multiple hospital stays and visits.

Hospital for Ross Gentle, Elizabeth Hall and of course Bob Mason

Hip replacements for Susan Woodward-Prior then her husband John

Eye treatments/cataract various members

Pauline Robinson contact as her husband had stroke

In all These Cases contact made and cards, flowers etc sent and follow up calls maintained.

Wendy Garner (Welfare Officer)

BEACON ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

The new Beacon2 System was abandoned when the software company pulled out. This is ongoing.

In the mean time Beacon1 has been given some enhancements to improve some operating Systems. The Email system has been moved to a separate Server and that has solved a lot of Email Problems. Over all the system works well with over 450 u3a's using it. The financial package in Beacon could be improved and hopefully will be, but over all it is a real asset to operating March u3a.

Dave Walton (Beacon Admin)

GROUP REPORTS

ALL THAT JAZZ

Through out lock-down 'All That Jazz' kept swinging

The group has a particular format. We choose a theme for each session such as the Jazz arranger or the Jazz composer and each of us will make three choices either on CD or to watch a performance on you tube. We are small in number and we therefore have the benefit of being able to meet quite comfortably in one another's homes.

Lock-down obviously prevented this but we were able to continue from April to July 2020 by emailing our choices to one another so that each of us could still listen to one another's choices and to comment on them. We tried to have a virtual group session but not all of us were able to participate because some of us did not have the technology.

From July to December 2020 we began meeting at St. John's church hall and this proved very successful and this is something that we could consider using again should our group attract new members and we no longer have the capacity for meeting in one another's homes. By July I had taken over leadership of the group from Mike Mance who informed us that he was living in Derbyshire for the foreseeable future.

From January 2021 until August 2021 we had to revert back to emailing our choices and not meeting face to face as new covid restrictions came into force.

We were able to meet again in August which was so enjoyable. So it has been a difficult year but we managed to continue with the sessions throughout even though the format was far from ideal for most of the time. In previous years we had been able to attend some life events and going forward we will be looking to be involved in more of these. I am also looking to put on some actual live Jazz events ourselves possibly using either St. John's or St. Peter's Church Hall so watch this space.

Dr Allan J. Whyte (Group Leader)

ARMCHAIR TRAVEL

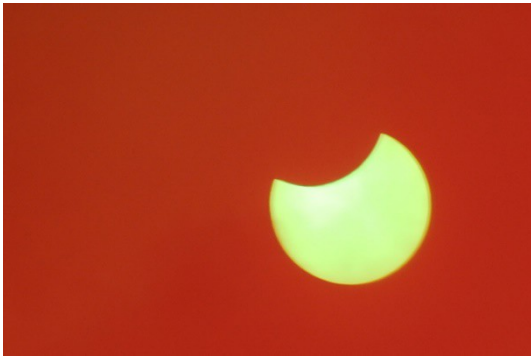
There are now two Armchair Travel Groups that will meet on the third and fourth Wednesday afternoons. This means the groups are smaller and more suited to the seating in our lounge. At present (August 2021) we have no definite date for restarting as risks of Covid infection, even to fully vaccinated people, still remain a factor in a confined indoor environment.

I have kept in touch with the groups by email and phone. In July this year we invited each group to tea in the garden. Many members were able to come and it was a great pleasure to see people again.

David Boxall (Group Leader)

ASTRONOMY Activities in 2021

Like other U3A groups, our activities in the Astronomy Group were limited by lock down, & by the time lock down was lifted, the light nights limited what we could do.



Nevertheless, we had a couple of observation nights in the spring, with good views of Mars & the Pleiades thanks to Ray's big telescope & Amanda's dark Fenland skies. In contrast, we met during the day on 10th June to observe a partial eclipse of the sun. You should never look at the Sun through a telescope, so suitable precautions were taken & we were rewarded with some spectacular photographs.

Along with other U3A Astronomy Groups, we wrote to our MP to ask what was being done about the proliferation of space junk. This has the potential to become a serious problem, affecting our communications & many aspects of modern life. Stephen Barclay MP replied with a considered review of what the government & international community were doing. We shall continue to monitor the situation.

With the dark nights of Autumn, we shall resume our observation nights, & hopefully there will be visits to the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge & other local observatories.

We nominally have 5 members, 4 of whom are active ... and would welcome new members who wish to turn their eyes to the heavens!

Ian Hewitt (Group Leader)

BIRDWATCHERS

Our last Birdwatching day out was in February 2021 as our March outing was cancelled due to bad weather. Little did we know that we wouldn't be enjoying visits to our lovely Reserves until May 2021.

We have now resumed and have had a day out every month so far. We have visited Kingfisher Bridge, Frampton Marsh, Sculthorpe Moor and Lackford Lakes.

Margaret Lloyd (Group Leader)

BOARD GAMES

Like the rest of the u3a, the last two years have been very strange for our little group. No meetings at all for over 18 months, but in June this year we split the meetings, 4 people at my home and the others at Jean Edgcombes home. We are hoping to get back to normal in October/november. Fingers crossed on that one. Not a lot to say about this situation i'm sorry to say.

We are still meeting at 2pm every 3rd Wednesday of the month at my place.

Joan Perring (Group Leader)

BRIDGE

The Group has not restarted as yet, with most players playing on line. Hopefully will start meeting again in the near Future.

Editer

CARD MAKING

Like many people, we initially we had no idea that Covid 19 would have such a long influence upon our regular monthly meetings, but by the end of April we decided to create a 'Round Robin'.

Members who were interested in the idea, would take turns to create a 'kit' and deliver these packs of card making materials and instructions to other members. The first Round Robin took place in May and since then we have had three rotations and made a total of fifteen cards.

It has been impossible to return to our monthly Card Making group meetings as we are unable to provide the necessary requirements for a 'Covid-safe Environment' (page 9-10 of u3a Guidelines and Government Guidance).

We hope to be able to meet (weather permitting) at our usual 2pm on the third Thursday of May 2021 at West End Park. It will be a 'bring your picnic seat and sit two metres away from one another' session and the first meeting for fifteen months. I think that it is likely that we will have to wait quite some time until we are able to return to our 'normal' meeting arrangement.

Following information from both The Third Age Trust and Government guidelines, I have assembled a proposal for us to return to regular meetings and I understand that the Committee need to be informed of this.

As stated on the document, we hope to have our first practical meeting of 2021 on Thursday 16th September.

Julia Wright (Group Leader)

CLASSIC FILM GROUP (Report 2021)

Like most of the indoor groups of March u3a we followed advice and have not met since the first lockdown. There was a social gathering this year, due to be a garden party but in view of the weather we met safely indoors where we spoke of our need for unrealistic films with happy endings to be on any new programme.

That has not yet happened. The virus has not gone away. Though rules have been removed, the overall advice is to avoid going into close contact indoors unless it is absolutely necessary, so I have reluctantly decided to stop inviting friends to watch projected films in my home. Luckily members of the group are endeavouring to keep it going, and so I am happy to announce the next meeting will be at the March Library on Friday, September 24th at 2,0 p.m. where Whatever Heaven Allows will be shown. Although you can find good films on TV, it is the comment and discussion -and laughter- afterwards that is the main constituent of this group. After almost ten years of organising and enjoying the group I feel I am able to ask for parole. I know the folk who have provided dvds and suggestions, and been of great help to me, will keep the group going. For further information contact Lynda Andrews or Allan Whyte.

Carol Jones. (Group Leader)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

I have decided not to continue with the Classical Music Groups. The Groups Co-ordinator has been seeking a new leader for this interest group.

David Boxall (Group Leader)

CREATIVE WRITING

I have not done a Report for Creative Writing as I am almost packed and ready to go on holiday for the month of September. However, with at least one attendee no longer a member of the March U3A and no meeting held virtually since February 2020 there is nothing to report. I will not be continuing as Group Leader for this Group but Jean Howes has intimated that she might pick up that baton?

Gill Osler (Group Leader)

CRAFT:

The Craft group was fortunate to be able to meet for a number of weeks at the BRAZA: we came equipped with hand gel and wipes, enjoying the chance to meet in the midst of all this misery. We welcomed old and new members alike, spending Tuesday afternoons in a friendly, chatty environment. We hope to resume as soon as practicable in these new surroundings. We met for years at the Community Centre but changes there made it impractical as the room charges doubled and it was unclear what would happen when the Centre was remodelled. Our new 'home' has been excellent and we would recommend it to other groups: the hall is well equipped, there is a clean kitchen and toilet facilities and ample parking. New members are welcome, you don't have to come every week, so long as our costs are covered, we would be pleased to see anyone who wants to drop in casually. This is a good group to join if you feel creative as someone is on hand who has the know how to help with most things. The Group has now resumed regular weekly meetings, 2pm Tuesdays The Braza Club.

Lynda Andrews (Group Leader)

CRIB (CRIBBAGE)

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we, along with most other Groups, had to stop all of our activities after our March 17th 2020 meeting. I tried to keep members informed during the lock downs but it soon became obvious that we would not be meeting for some time. Some of our members played the game online and/or with their partners but it isn't the same as group interaction. Now that restrictions have been

eased we have recommenced our meetings with the first being on Monday 14th June 2021. The pleasure on the member's faces was a joy to see. We used to play in the back room of The Ship public house on Nene Parade, March, but, due to the difficulties of complying to the Covid restrictions, were forced to seek an alternative venue. We were welcomed by the manager of the Olde Griffin Hotel, March, who made a room available for us which could meet the Covid criteria. We now start half an hour later at 2.30 and normally play for about 2 hours. A suggestion by one member to meet weekly was rejected by the rest as they thought fortnightly was enough. Our registered membership has now reduced to 14 which is manageable under the present circumstances. We lost one of our founder member stalwarts, Reg Lowther, who sadly died in May 2020. He will be missed by all. Once conditions allow we will consider returning

to The Ship as the members enjoy the atmosphere. Meanwhile we are happy to continue as we are and we look forward to an 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 meet at the Library on second Thursday each month, 10 -12 noon.

Usually we have some nominated topics to discuss but quite often a current news item comes in. This provides some interesting arguments (low key of course) so each session is animated to say the least. Also, as we are an assorted group politically and socially, this also makes sure that there is very seldom any stops in conversion.

David Rapetti (Group Leader)

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Just to let you all know that when we do eventually get going, membership of the a/m group is likely to be much reduced since Nick, (Group leader nominate) has had only minimal response from them.

I had planned to hold a meeting as soon as restrictions were eased but because of the current somewhat concerning spread of the Indian Covid 19 variant, have chosen to put this on hold.

Ian Hewitt (Group Leader)

DRESSMAKING GROUP

We started meeting again some time ago but then had to stop.

We have finally restarted meetings as from 24th August which I hope will now continue uninterrupted.

There are 8 in the group including myself and we meet every Tuesday morning from 10:15-12:45 at my home. I'm afraid I cannot accept any new members to the group.

Ann Bowden (Group Leader)

EXPLORING RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

I just wanted to inform you that the first meeting of the newly named 'Exploring Religion and Spirituality' group will be on Thursday the 26th August from 2pm to 4pm at St. Peter's Church Hall, 54 High Street, March. The meeting will be on every 4th Thursday of the month. There is ample parking and there will be no costs for the room hire. We only ask for a 50 pence donation towards tea, coffee and refreshments. I will send you further details nearer the time but this is just for your diaries.

Allan Whyte (Group Leader)

FAMILY HISTORY

Like many groups over the the last 18 months, there were no meetings or get together's with members. I have decided that I no longer want to lead the group.

Ann Bass (Group Leader)

FLOWER ARRANGING

I have no idea at the moment if or when the Flower Arranging group will start again. With Covid-19 rising nationally and locally, it would be not feasible to have the group in my house in close proximity.

Sandra Mills (Group Leader)

FRENCH LANGUAGE

The French group has not met during this period. We are a small group more focused on "French conversation" than formal learning, although we do improve. We usually chose a topic and write a short piece about it, play games and chat. We have recently started reading simple stories in French to help with pronunciation and vocabulary. We have met in the library and hope to restart when conditions allow. We are friendly and would welcome new members.

We are thinking of changing the name to French Conversation as we are not covering grammar and syntax. We may also change the venue. Tbc

Lynda Andrews (Group Leader)

GARDENING GROUP 1

At the start of 2020 the group were looking forward to a fresh year and arranging visits out, however the first outing at the beginning of April was cancelled due to Covid 19 and apart from four members meeting in my garden in August and September (well-spaced out) that was it!

At long last in June 2021 the group restarted with half of the members meeting in my garden during the morning and the rest in the afternoon which brought us in line with the recommended numbers. We agreed that gardening was a pastime we enjoyed but we all missed the groups that we normally attended in the U3A.

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 have a full number in the group at the moment. We have started up again this year now we are allowed.

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 GROUP

The Geography Group has not met during lockdown although some members took advantage of the link to the 'Great Courses' to follow courses. In July we invited the group to tea in the garden. Many members were able to come and it was a great pleasure to see people again. At present (August 2021) we have no definite date for restarting as risks of Covid infection, even to fully vaccinated people, still remain a factor in a confined indoor environment.

David Boxall (Group Leader)

GERMAN LANGUAGE REPORT

Owing to a very serious illness on my part the group did not meet for several months. Now that things are back to normal the German group has restarted. We meet on alternate Fridays at the March Library at 10am until 12noon. We are a small but friendly group and with the aid of books and dvds we are slowly learning the everyday language of Germany.

Margaret Cumming (Group Leader)

GRUMPY OLD MEN GROUP (GRUMPIES) – 2021

This time last year (April'20) the AGM would have taken place had it not been for the Covid lockdown, at this time we had 42 members and 20 regular participants.

The 1st lockdown commenced on 23rd March 2020 and up till then we'd had 3 trips out, one to the Greyhounds at Peterborough (which has since closed), on 29th Jan, the 2nd to RAF Marham on 28th Feb and the last one in early March was to the Brickworks at Kings Dyke near Whittlesey. The average no. of members attending these visits was 15.

In early July'20 it was established that there was sufficient interest within the Grumpies to run a weekly

Zoom group, it was quickly agreed to and our first zoom took place on Wed 15th July and has been running since then. On average we've had 8 /9 members consistently and I think it is fair to say that we all look forward to it and discuss what we've been doing, what we've been watching on TV and what we feel about certain issues, it's a great way to stay in touch.

With regards to re-start up of U3A meetings and visits, it is not considered possible, mainly due to our

numbers (i.e., 20 regular members) until after 21st June when the Government Covid Regulations are lifted, all being well. It is my intention to hold the first Grumpies meeting to discuss various matters including our itinerary for the rest of the year on one of the Wednesdays after the 21st i.e., 23rd or 30th June. In the meantime, we have made a temporary booking with Foxes in March for the hire of 2 Canal Boats for Friday 2nd July, this will be our first trip out this year.

We are a thriving male only group who meet monthly at a local public house (The Ship) with a view to making friends and identifying and organising trips to places of male interest. These trips will generally have an educational bias towards technology, natural history and anything within reason where there is sufficient interest. We welcome new members and potential members who come along for a tester.

John Smith (Group Leader)

HISTORY GROUP 1

When I contacted the group members proposing a restart, only one or two were interested in restarting. I therefore advised everyone that it would not be restarting.

I understand Maureen's group is in the same situation.

Alan Burdass (Group Leader)

HISTORY GROUP 2

Due to a lack of members, this group closed and moved to History group One.

HEALTH WALKS

Our Group is into its 12th year. This year has been difficult due to the Pandemic, but the walks have kept going in between the Lock downs.

We are back to normal, meeting at the car park behind the Iceland Store very Monday morning. 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, plus of course the Prison Walk which we all enjoy. The route depends on the weather and conditions underfoot.

Numbers vary on each walk.

Unfortunately, a few of us have had some health issues, so are unable to walk at the moment, but hope we will eventually get back to some normality.

Our Group are again enjoying meeting in Wetherspoons, for coffee and a chat after the walk.

Rose Morrissey, (Group Leader)

LUNCH GROUP 2021

The Lunch Group hasn't met since February 2020 because of Covid. I have kept in touch with members by email. There are now 30 names on the list some of whom have not actually been to the group. I had hoped to restart on two occasions but the nature of the activity means that I am being very cautious about restarting. At the time of writing in late August Covid is still very much a factor so, although pubs and restaurants are open, it does not yet seem wise to arrange for a large group to meet in that environment.

Jennifer Boxall (Group Leader)

MAH JONG

We play in members homes in and around March . When we were able we played in small groups. Now nearly back to normal we play in groups up to fourteen. For those who don't know Mah jong, this is played with tiles in different suits with three or four players.

It's not a difficult game just hard to explain so the best way to learn is to come along to a session and watch a game being played then it's quite easy to understand.

We play weekly on Monday afternoons starting at 2pm. If you want to learn something more, please contact me through the website.

Beryl Walton (Group leader.)

PRACTICAL ART

The Practical Art group started back at the library on Tuesday 24th August. There were 9 members present and a few others have said that they will be back for the next session so I am quite pleased.

Everyone was very enthusiastic about starting again and some very good work was produced in between the catching up chat.

We shall meet again on Tuesday 28th September at 10am. The suggested project is animals but as usual members can choose their own subject.

New members are very welcome.

We have use of the Wordsworth room but at the moment only 10 people are allowed in there so the library have said that we can use the former learning centre at the other end of the library for overflow members if more than 10 arrive. We have full use of the kitchen and toilets but members must bring their own refreshment. Masks are not mandatory but recommended

Ann Smith (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 started play this year as soon as we were allowed on the first Thursday at 2pm at the Vine Public House in Coates 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.

We had a trip to Old Hunstanton beach this August for a game followed by an al-fresco lunch and a drink. This was very enjoyable and we hope to do the same next 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 GROUP

For most of last year, some of us used WhatsApp to meet which was lovely but didn't suit everyone. I was keen that we should be able to get together in person as soon as that became a possibility. We meet on the first Tuesday morning of each month.

As we're a small group, we've been able to meet for the last few months at each other's homes. We have a different theme each time. For instance in September 2021 it's "Joy".

I'm not a poetry expert by any means. I joined the group because I was interested in finding out a little more and somehow became its leader. We learn from each other.

The poems we read often provoke lively discussion.

We'll continue to meet as long as we feel it's safe to do so in the current circumstances.

Brenda Wyatt (Group Leader)

SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

Unfortunately the previous leader have to retire due to poor Health. The new Group Leader is at the moment looking into finding suitable premises with the right equipment in order to restart the Group.

Steve Hoskyn (New Group Leader)

SCRABBLE and SNACK

We've started to meet again after so-called normality was restored and have so far had two sessions. Our meetings currently take place once a month at my house. We start with a sociable half hour while we enjoy the snack, which group members take it in turn to provide.

We normally play two games in groups of three or four, spread into different rooms in the house.

It's currently a fresh air experience with doors and windows open.

I think people are glad to be able to meet again and I'm really enjoying their company and the competition. Currently we have 11 people in the group which is enough for now.

I'll keep an eye on infection rates and decide from month to month whether it's safe to meet. Obviously we can't have doors and windows open in mid winter.

Brenda Wyatt (Group Leader)

SHORTMAT BOWLS

The short mat Bowls group had to shut down because of the refurbishment of the Community Centre along with the rest of the u3a. However the return to the Centre was very delayed by Covid 19.

The Centre is now opening again but unfortunately the Group Leader is now unable to continue due to family health problems. This is a small group and some have moved away, and there is nobody left to take over running the Group. So reluctantly the Group will have to close.

The Groups equipment is still stored at the centre in an outbuilding and some is now missing. However steps will need to be taken to collect and sort the Items, which we may be able to sell.

Editer (for Group Leader)

SPECIAL QUILTING

Unfortunately the Quilting Group has no Leaders at the Moment so we cannot say when the Group may start up again.

Editer

STROLLERS

As we gently come back into the real World, this is my last attempt to keep this wonderful group going, which sadly, for want of a Leader, Facilitator, Administrator (call him or her what you like) without whom the group cannot function and will therefore need to be closed down if nobody comes forward!

Strollers, one of our three walking groups was founded soon after March 2020 appeared on the scene in the early two thousand, so Strollers was one of our very first groups. Initially Strollers was run by David (with Jen) Boxall and with a very simple aim.

To have a short (about 3 miles or less), comfortable and sociable stroll at a site with some local interest and incorporate a lunch stop or a picnic. The stroll might include a visit to a Castle, River, Bird Hide, Church, interesting view and so on, at one there was even a quiz. On another we toured around Ramsey and fed the ducks at the village pond. After several years and with his portfolio of other learning groups increasing, Leadership was passed on to Joyce Thorne who has been in the chair up to when we were all Locked Down as Covid struck last year and all our groups were immobilised. Joyce feels that it is now time for her to hand over.

The job is quite simple, you are the link between all the group members and the committee. You will have access to our administration system, Beacon, which supplies all the members data, address, email, phone etc, and which does not interfere with your own email system. On our website there is info about setting up and running a group and specific guidelines for walking groups.

Any member of the group can suggest and lead a stroll, you just have to ensure that they have read the

guidelines and that the group is advised of the plan, there is one stroll each month (unless postponed by the weather). Usually, we'd start at a venue where a cuppa and toilets were available, give the group an idea of what to expect and so on, and set off - pretty straightforward really. So you don't even have to know the stroll, just administer it. A little gentle exercise, a little learning, some grub and great company.

Dawn Nash and Sharon Smith (Group Leaders)

TABLE TENNIS

I have been in contact with the Community Centre about restarting table tennis as soon as possible. I have filled in their application form and risk assessment. And we now have a start Date of the 27th September. I have now to just do their induction tour, to learn the Key Codes etc. I am looking forward to playing again.

Will keep you posted!

Best wishes,

Mary Barrington (Group Leader)

TAI CHI

The new Tai Chi group starts on Monday 6th September at March Town Hall.

Twenty people have shown interest and signed up for an initial 'try and see' session with a few of the original members. Following the taster session, we intend to choose a group name and meet regularly on a Monday morning.

The group will continue to follow Paul Lam's sequences and develop skills through group practice.

Numbers are limited due to space constraints and people's personal comfort so there is no waiting list, but should there be space in the future, I will update at monthly meetings.

Val Greig, (Group Leader)

TIN WHISTLE GROUP

We have Zoomed on through the Lock down, leapfrogging the sessions on a fortnightly basis. We now have over 200 tunes and our stalwarts have made steady progress. They have moved on to the more aurally-demanding stage of committing tunes to memory and playing them without the notes. This is a skill that is neglected in 'formal' music education, to the detriment of a deeper appreciation of truly making the music one's own, rather than just dots on a page. In that sense, traditional playing has much in common with jazz.

We are in the process of discussing if or when we might re-convene 'in the flesh'.

If there is anyone out there who would like to try their hand at the Whistle, do get in touch.

Paddy McEvoy (Group Leader)

THEATRE GOERS GROUP

By the time Covid-19 hit us and the first Lockdown occurred in March 2020 we had already booked and paid for 6 shows and provisionally booked for another, taking us up to October. Throughout the year there would have been a few others added. But it was not to be. When Lockdown was set in motion I was still recovering from a bad bout of pneumonia but was able to continue with the administration of the Group from home.

Shows booked for 2020, paid for and refunded during 2020/21:

The Sound of Music - Milton Keynes - 18th March (the day after theatres closed!)

Mama Mia - Nottingham - March*

We Will Rock You - Northampton - May*

Everybody's Talking About Jamie - Norwich - June*

Footloose - Milton Keynes - July*

Those shows marked with an * were rescheduled - sometimes more than once - but took us into 2022 so the choice of a refund was taken on the belief that we could always re-book at a later date if that was what members wanted.

Show pre-booked but not paid for when Lockdown occurred:

Strictly Ballroom - Milton Keynes - October

Show booked 2020, paid for, rescheduled and attended in 2021:

Priscilla Queen of the Desert - Northampton Royal & Derngate Theatre - 4th August 2021

As with all Shows that were rescheduled an email was sent to booked attendees to ask if they wanted me to Cancel (and be refunded) or Reschedule. There was no third choice with any theatres so the democratic 'majority' was the deciding factor. Those who decided after we had rescheduled from 2020 to August 2021 that they were not ready to attend an event in a closed space just yet, or had elected to go on holiday or have family visiting were made aware that they would not be refunded the £26 ticket cost for the one Show that was attended. Everyone who contacted me was understanding about this as it was a theatre ruling rather than a March U3A ruling.

Refunds paid for Cancelled Shows:

Once the decision had been made to ask for the Refund Option and the money was returned to my bank account, an email was sent to those affected asking them to either contact me to collect their cheque from my home or send me a stamped addressed envelope so I could post it to them. A spreadsheet was created with the Show details which included payment made/payment outstanding columns; and each time another Show got cancelled the spreadsheet was updated accordingly - in total 63 Group Members were accounted for and almost £4,000 refunded by me. The remaining responsibility for payment of refunds was handed over to the March U3A Committee in March 2021 with the residue of money transferred to the U3A Bank Account via a cheque as requested plus the spreadsheet showing exactly who had been paid what and the remaining persons who hadn't requested their money as of that date.

Transport paid for Cancelled Shows:

Fortunately the transport cost was never paid until a few weeks before attendance so the majority of

cancelled shows did not apply. As local coach companies are family owned in the main the decision was made to accept a Credit Note instead of insisting on a refund. All Members involved in the couple of shows where payment had been made did not object to this choice: it would have been counterproductive to cause our only means of getting to the theatres to become bankrupt!

With prices rising and a larger than needed coach being requested as a comfort factor when we attended the theatre in Northampton, our credit has now been used.

Financial Update of the Group:

The Group has always been run on the basis that once a year during March members will pay a £2 annual subscription which helps to cover the costs of telephone calls, stationery equipment etc. As we have such a large Group this fee has remained unchanged since 2012. I wasn't well enough to attend the March 2020 U3A monthly meeting and then we went into Lockdown. This has resulted in less than 50% of members paying the 2020 Subscription Fee but I have had theatres and transport companies to contact, many emails to send and spreadsheets to print out, as well as members not on email to telephone over a twelve month period which has ensured that the small pot of Fees that I had has been depleted.

The Future of the Theatre Goers Group:

Lockdown is now over (hopefully) and the unprecedented need to cancel and refund is thankfully now a thing of the past. Having run the Group single-handedly since 2012 - and seen it grow into the largest March U3A Group with Shows as far afield as London and as close as Kings Lynn - I have decided the time is ripe for somebody else to pick up the baton. I would be prepared to assist a new Group Leader in any way I can for a mutually agreed specified time and will make available all the contacts made and full information that has helped to ensure it can be run by a single person. Although a couple would probably be better!

I wish to thank all those Members who helped make the TheatreGoers Group such a successful and happy Group. You have all enriched my life and I have enjoyed seeing some wonderful shows and eating some great lunches with you. Hopefully the Group will continue to exist and flourish because I for one would still like to join you for a fantastic day out.

Jill Osler (Current Group Leader)

Annual Report 2021

UNDERSTANDING ART

There are two Understanding Art Groups, one meeting the afternoon and one in the evening. The groups follow different DVD courses. I have kept in touch with the groups by email and phone. Some members took advantage of the link to the 'Great Courses' website to follow courses, or borrowed DVDs. In July and August this year we invited each group to tea in the garden. Many members were able to come and it was a great pleasure to see people again.

At present (August 2021) we have no definite date for restarting as risks of Covid infection, even to fully vaccinated people, still remain a factor in a confined indoor environment.

David Boxall Group Leader)

WALKERS GROUP- Jan 2020 till July 31st 2021

The Walkers group currently has 24 members. We meet on the third Friday of each month to complete a 5-to-6-mile walk followed by lunch in a pub or café if wished. Members may also bring a packed lunch instead if preferred. We usually travel to the start of the walk independently but lifts can be given to anyone who doesn't have transport or prefers not to drive. Details are e mailed to members approximately 1 to 2 weeks before the walk and members must reply promptly to indicate whether they intend to join the walk.

Since Jan 2020 our walks have been somewhat intermittent due to the Covid lock downs and restrictions but we have been luckier than some groups in getting together as, of course, our activity is mostly outside. Our walk in January 2020 was from Heacham to Hunstanton and back, led by Paul and Ann Bass as we, the group leaders, were away on holiday from January until mid-April. The February walk was organised and led by Jenny Webb around Ferry Meadows. The March walk was planned by Janet and Steve Hoskins but could not take place as the first Covid lockdown started. From then until about July 2020 no walks could take place due to Covid restrictions.

From July to Oct 2020 some very local walks took place in and around March with initially only 6 walkers allowed to participate (different Walkers each time) due to restrictions and with lunch being offered in our garden. Eventually we realised that more could take part in organised outdoor activities so

numbers were increased though take up, understandably, was quite low. The next two lockdowns basically prohibited walks so we started again in earnest in May of this year.

Since May of this year, we have completed 3 circular walks, Houghton Mill, Holywell and Wansford. Attendance numbers have been relatively low, 13, 8 and 9 respectively, but it was great for some of us to get together again after such a long time and we hope that this continues.

We would, of course, welcome any new members to join us.

Sharon and John Smith (Group Leaders)

WALKERS AND STROLLERS

Just to put you in the picture, the Walkers group completed its first group walk on 21st May, 13 attended. The first Strollers walk will be this Friday, the 4th June, and 17 intend to join it,

Sharon Smith

WRITING SUPPORT GROUP

The function of the group is to encourage and support all those who want to write. The group had its first meeting in October 2019 it had ten members, the plan was to meet monthly on the fourth Thursday. Not all members were able to come to that first meeting but there was enthusiasm, variety plus a great deal of support and encouragement for each other. And that is the group's aim. Writing whether fact or fiction often needs encouragement, even acclaimed and well-known writers often say that. But more importantly writing is satisfying to do it stimulates imagination and perhaps helps to avoid mental decline.

The second meeting in November went well, each member was fully engaged and everyone had something to contribute. We agreed not to meet in December - the day of our meeting would have been boxing day - but looked forward to next our meeting in January 2020. That too was successful demonstrating considerable promise for what we hoped was to come.

Of course, what was to come was the coronavirus with the result that our February meeting was to be the last before lockdown in March 2020. I kept in touch with members via email but not everyone wanted to

use email and by implication Zoom or other platforms. It also became clear that some members no longer wanted involvement, even at arm's length, outside of their homes. Most people were fearful but in any event the shielding order meant that without using online protocols there was no way forward.

As 2020 progressed and restrictions yoyoed somewhat, the five remaining members- that includes myself - met socially distanced, in my garden. The weather of course couldn't be guaranteed which meant that our meetings were somewhat random. I would check the forecast and email members accordingly. And those meetings were successful not just from the point of view of what people achieved with their writing, one of our number completed the first draft of a novel, but also the level of encouragement we gave each other. We managed to maintain those meetings until October 2020.

Garden meetings couldn't continue through the winter months of course but in any event the situation changed with another total lockdown. When restrictions began easing in March of this year, I suggested we resume our meetings in April, but at that time members were caught up in events in their own lives and the group meetings were on hold to an extent, but three of us met recently on 24th June. Now it seems certain there will be further lifting of restrictions the future looks promising. It may be that members of

the group who decided to leave may return. The group has much to offer and I hope membership may increase when people feel comfortable leaving their homes and mixing socially but I foresee that taking time.

Going forward the government's final easing of restrictions combined with how we manage living with the threat of the virus will determine future plans.

Ps

The Writing Support Group resumed properly last month. We had managed to keep going with ad hoc garden meetings throughout much of last year. But now the intention is to return to formal monthly meetings.

But the members, just four people now, have agreed to change the day to the third Friday in every month. The change suited us all and has enabled Allan to take advantage of the date he was offered at the new venue for his new Exploring Religion and Spirituality group.

I am not sure if I need to advise anyone else of our change of day, perhaps you will let me know. And I confirm the meetings are still held at my home.

Jill Monck-Mason (Group Leader)

