



Information For New Members

A Brief History of the u3a

The UK u3a movement, founded in 1982, encourages groups of people in their third age to come together and continue their enjoyment of learning in subjects of interest to them in an informal environment. The 'third age' is defined by a time in your life where you have the time and opportunity to broaden your interests, widen your general knowledge, pursue your hobbies and learn new skills. There is no minimum age, but a focus on people who are no longer tied by full-time employment or parental duties. Internationally, the u3a movement started in 1972 in France but while the French model is based on courses delivered by academics, the British model encourages third-agers to develop their interests together, working with and learning from each other, while having a lot of fun.

Today in the UK, there are more than 1,050 u3as with over 450,000 members.

Ethos of the u3a

The u3a is built on the principles of mutual help and support; it is not an organisation where members are passively fed content and experiences by "leaders" or "teachers". Each of our groups is an independent entity whose members decide together what they will do and how they will do it. Each member is encouraged to contribute and take an active part. If we are not meeting your needs, you can step up and fill the gap!

Welcome to Melton Mowbray u3a.

Membership of Melton Mowbray u3a currently is around 600 members and there are about 60 activity groups.

The first full meeting of Melton U3A (as it was then known) was held on 18th April 1996. Margaret Butler was chairman and the main speakers were Vic and Joan Dixon, talking about their trip to New Zealand. Groups running at that time were: Watercolour painting, Calligraphy, Music, Scrabble, Rambling and Local History/Ambling. In the pipeline were Bridge for Beginners and Gardens & Gardening.

In November 2005, after much discussion, the name of our u3a was changed to Melton Mowbray. The first newsletter was issued in May 1996, in which it was confirmed that annual £10 subscriptions were payable. Melton Mowbray u3a was registered as a charity in its' own right on 3rd September 2010.

It is important to recognise we are all jointly responsible for the success of the organisation and that all of us can play a part to ensure that it runs smoothly. It is a unique feature of the u3a that, generally, our new members are the most able and we actively encourage new members to start new groups and stand for Committee vacancies.

Monthly Meeting

Our monthly meeting is normally held at the Baptist Church on Leicester Road at 10am on the 3rd Thursday of the month and typically attracts 25-30% of our members.

The focus of the meeting is generally a talk delivered by a guest speaker but in December this is usually replaced by an entertainment programme provided by members and in January it is replaced by the "Meet the Groups" event where all our groups have a stand showing their activities. In March a shortened talk is preceded by the AGM.

When held in the Baptist Church, our Meet and Greet team is on hand to welcome new members and visitors on arrival. They will show you around, explain how we work and answer questions. After the talk, the check-in desk becomes the New Members Coffee area where Committee members and others can be found to talk with those of you who may not yet have met many fellow members. Tea, coffee and biscuits are provided after the talk and there is an opportunity to book theatre trips and outings and there are exchange tables for

books, DVDs and jigsaws. Previously, one of our groups provided a foyer display of their work, although this was suspended during the pandemic. It is hoped to reinstate this in the near future. Committee members are usually on hand to address administrative matters

Groups

Most u3a activities take place in our groups. The number varies but we currently have about 60, covering a wide range of activities. A variety of venues are used and this information is included on the Groups List. The u3a constitution requires all groups to be financially independent and non-profit making and prohibits members charging for their time or expertise.

A Risk Assessment for each group has to be undertaken and submitted to the Group Coordinator before commencement of activities to ensure the group is compliant with any current Government restrictions and safe. Individual Group Leaders will be able to advise on their Group's meeting status.

Many groups, because of their venue or the nature of their activity, will have limited spaces and the group you would like to join may be full. If groups are full, the leader will usually keep a waiting list. We are always keen to facilitate new groups and the Groups Co-ordinator is here to advise. (email: groups@u3ameltonmowbray.org.uk) If you would like a group on something we do not currently offer, it is easy to find like-minded members by submitting a paragraph for inclusion in the next newsletter asking those interested to contact you. This is done by contacting the Newsletter Editor (email: editor@u3ameltonmowbray.org.uk). You can then call a preliminary meeting and decide the way forward together. If groups have long waiting lists we may invite the waiting list to a meeting to discuss the formation of an additional group.

Group Leaders co-ordinate communications within a group but will expect all members to help with tasks to ensure the smooth running of the group. There may be one member who manages the programme, another who collects the money, one who books the venue, one who arranges the tea and biscuits etc.

Monthly Newsletter

A Newsletter is emailed, or posted out at additional cost, to members each month. You will have been asked for your preference on joining. Everyone is encouraged to contribute their views and thoughts on serious and humorous matters alike.

MM u3a Administration

The u3a is a registered charity so it has to have a constitution and be administered by a committee who are also trustees. The Committee is re-elected annually at the AGM and Committee members are only allowed to stand for 3 years unless they become Chairman. Many of our older members have previously served on the Committee so it is important that new and younger members step up and fill the Committee roles as we cannot legally or administratively function otherwise.

Because our expenses are tightly controlled, the annual subscription is very affordable. We forward a capitation fee of £4.00 and a Beacon administration system fee of £1.00 from this on behalf of each member to the national u3a Trust. In return we receive services such as legal support, insurance and administration assistance. Members are encouraged to visit the national website- www.u3a.org.uk – to learn about their other services. A number of advice sheets and online courses are available and there is a Virtual u3a for the housebound and others.

Further information can be found on our branch website- www.u3ameltonmowbray.org.uk.

We are delighted that you have joined us and are pleased that we will be able to "Learn, Laugh and Live" together.