

Dear u3a member,

Welcome to our December Newsletter.

The run-up to Christmas has begun. We can look forward to lots of good food and lots of cracker jokes; When it comes to sitting down round the table, all I can say is 'give peas a chance'.

Please continue to send your letters, creative works and local photos to: ken's email, putting the word 'Newsletter' in your email subject box. The deadline for receipt of information is the Friday of the last week of the month. This month the relevant Friday was actually the 1st of December; so it is not necessarily the last Friday of the month.

With every good wish for Christmas and the New Year from your Editor, Ken Fisher.

In this month's newsletter

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Message from our Chair, Ray Tier

As I write this on the 1st December the sights and sounds of Christmas are all around us and there will be no escape from them until New Year's Day, after which we will no doubt miss them. I have already enjoyed the Lunch Group's Christmas lunch at the College of Food (as I still call it), and I am looking forward to at least four more festive group feasts of one kind or another before the big day itself dawns. Personally, I can never have too much turkey and Christmas pudding, and I usually stockpile enough mince pies in my freezer to last me until Easter and the arrival of hot cross buns. I expect many of you also belong to groups which are organising similar seasonal celebrations and of course our monthly meeting on Tuesday 12 December will feature a talk by Sylvia Gill about pantomimes at The Rep, which should be great fun and a good opportunity to socialise. Those of you who own Christmas jumpers (unfortunately I don't) are encouraged to wear them and any other festive attire!

As there won't be another newsletter until the end of January this is an opportunity to wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year and to thank you all for everything you have done this year, whether by organising or participating in our groups and activities, to ensure that our u3a continues to prosper.

As the saying goes, long may we Learn, Live, and (particularly at this time of year) Laugh!

Events and reminders

Drop in for a coffee and chat



Drop in for a coffee and chat at Fletcher's Bar Friday 8th December from 10:30 to 12:00 at Fletcher's Bar in York Road in Kings Heath. We have the front room to ourselves. You just need to pay for your own drink at the counter in The Kitchen Garden café, cost will depend on your choice of drink. We will provide biscuits. All access is through the Kitchen Garden Cafe, this includes disability access, but if required they can also put up a ramp at the front door of Fletcher's provided you let them know in advance.

These Coffee mornings are held monthly on the second Friday of the month so dates for New Year are:

January 12th 2024

February 9th

March 8th

April 12th

Choir

Our Choir is working hard preparing for several Christmas 'gigs' this month, including singing a few carols at the WI Christmas Carol Service at St Martin's in the Bullring on Saturday 9th December. Entry to non-WI members is £7. Sherry and mince pies will be provided as well as the opportunity to join in some carols! The service begins at 11am, with the doors being open at 10.30am

Monthly Meetings

A message from Janet Burgess, our Social Secretary

November Monthly Meeting

A much better attendance of 37 heard a fascinating series of oral archive material covering the last century. Our guest speaker, Helen Lloyd, whom several of the audience knew, has interviewed a host of West Midlands people and their reminiscences covered issues and memories of immigrant integration, coping with bereavement in WW II, changing nature of a neighbourhood and welcoming new friendships, plus the world of work amongst others. Ordinary people indeed but very compelling stories.

December 12 meeting 2 pm at the Shires

Sylvia Gill, honorary research fellow at University of Birmingham, will talk about 'Christmas Plays at The Rep. 'Oh yes, she will'. We hope to welcome many of you there. We will also hear from a West Midlands Regional trustee, Jean Jackson, who will talk for 5-10 minutes about her role, show us examples of U3A merchandise and be around afterwards for any queries.

You may be interested in coming earlier on Tuesday 12 as the Shires bistro is offering a Christmas lunch from 12-2 pm. A vegetarian option is available. Two courses costs £25 and three costs £30. If interested please contact The Shires on 0121 449 4870.

Membership Matters

Welcome to our new members

Diana James and Helen Lealan,

Sad news

Some members may remember Rosemary Foulkes who, with the help of Diane Worland and Sylvia Butler, set up Beginners Bridge at her Kings Norton home about ten years ago. Rosemary's eyesight gradually worsened and she had to leave our branch though several of us continued to visit and play until last month. Her passing at the age of 97 was quick and peaceful. She was a delightful lady and will be much missed. Her funeral is on Monday 18 December at 11 am in St Nicolas Church on Kings Norton Green.

Interest Group Matters

Our Interest Group Co-ordinator is Anne James, and she can be contacted via the Interest Group Enquiries tab on our web site at:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/mkhdu3a/contact>

Details about our Interest Groups can be found by clicking on the web-site link: [Members Portal](#)

Vacancies in Interest Groups

Book Group 5

This Group have a vacancy. Members particularly enjoy contemporary fiction including novels in translation, and they often read fiction that has been long- or short-listed or has won major book awards such as the Booker. Discussions are always lively and different views are welcomed. Contact Rosemary Rivett, the Group Leader, at rosemary@rivett163.com for more details

Scrabble

This Group has also generated some interest, with five people keen to be part of a group which meets face to face. We could do with a few more to make the group more viable. Want to find out more? Contact Anne James, via our web site details as above.

Gallery Visits :

A few people are keen to be part of a new group. Anne will be setting up a meeting in the New Year. Interested? Contact Anne James, via our web site details as above.

Would-Be-Writers Group

This group meets at 10.30 am on the third Wednesday of each month at the Shires on Wake Green Road. There are currently a couple of vacancies for members wishing to improve their writing skills. If you are interested, please contact Ken Fisher

Health and Safety

Please inform your Group Leader or a member of our Executive Committee of any H&S concerns that you may have, so that these can be fully addressed as soon as possible.

Risk Assessment documents can be found on the [National u3a site](#) by following the menu link - 'Support for u3a's'. However, you will need to log-in (and create an account if you do not have one) to enable you to search for relevant information

A Christmas short story

From Ros Napier of our Creative Writing Group

Don't Forget Christmas Jumper Day tomorrow!

"When Santa got stuck up the chimney." Reception's spirited rendering rings through the corridor as I make my way to Nursery's Nativity play. I normally wear smart tailoring in neutral colours offset by coral silk scarves and small pearl studs, but today I am wearing a multicoloured acrylic Christmas jumper and a pair of dangly earrings in the shape of Christmas trees, bought on a last minute raid on Primark. The jumper I queued with initially seemed ok as far as Christmas jumpers go, until my daughter pointed out that it had "I'm one of Santa's HO HO HOs!" on it, so I had to hastily swap it for something else. This has a Rudolph with a battery operated light up nose, fortunately broken, and is two sizes too big, but last minute shoppers can't be choosers.

Nursery nativity over (in truth just little children standing shyly in paper hats while their teachers sing lustily), I go back to the office, with a swerve into the hall to see how the Christmas dinner is coming along. OK, is the rather tight lipped response I get, which signals that once again there is a difference of opinion between the catering staff and dinner ladies, and I attempt to listen to both sides and restore some semblance of holiday cheer.

The truth is, I hate Christmas. It all starts just after half term in November, with production lines of cards and calendars, hours spent rehearsing plays ("SMILE angels!"), and the forced jollity of card-swapping, the staff night out, governors' night out, school Christmas lunch, staff buffet lunch, secret santa, and then the depressing tearing down of yards of red and green frieze paper, and a caretaker grumbling about glitter and white glue in the carpets. I thought I might be able to tone it down, but I'm a new Head and I've already had to challenge "But we've always done it this way," about curriculum matters, so I've let Christmas go.

My P.A is waiting in the office with a couple of messages. She's new too, and she is wearing a tasteful Fair Isle sweater she has knitted herself from recycled wool. I silently beseech forgiveness from what ever god there may be for the Primark offences, and for hating my PA.

Christmas dinner is in the hall with three hundred children shouting over "Now that's what I call Christmas". Our catering staff do amazing meals for the pittance they are allocated, but this is not one of them. A child is sick, and I leave my dinner to help clean her up, then sit with her in the entrance hall with a bucket. A TA has kindly saved my dinner and robustly microwaved it, and I eat it dutifully while everyone else finishes their puddings.

I really fancy a night in, but I have promises to keep, so I dutifully change into "a pair of jeans and a sparkly top" (another tradition, apparently) and head to All Bar One for a Christmas meal. Everyone has forgotten what they ordered, and there is no vegan option left. After, there is a plan to go on somewhere else. I wave them off with "you young people go off and enjoy yourselves", and head home.

Apparently they did enjoy themselves, judging from the ashen faces the next day. Now it is the turn of key stage one to perform their Christmas play, a long and frankly impenetrable story about a lost angel, devised so that every child in each of three classes gets a speaking part. I'm mentally rehearsing the thanks to teachers, TAs, pianist, "and, last but not least, your talented children," when the introductory bars are played, and suddenly I am overwhelmed.

"Away in a manger", sing the reception class softly, and all my defences are down, and my cynicism melts away, and I find my self smiling through unshed tears.

Happy Christmas!

Photograph from a member

By Roy Stove of our Photography Group



American Red Oak in Bournville

A magnificent tree. Note the small figure, and one of very few local trees to change colour in October.

Scam watch

Prize-winning scams

There are a number of emails circulating congratulating recipients on a winning prize due to being a 'valued customers'. The scammer is hoping that the recipient will have recently bought something from the Company mentioned, and therefore believe it to be a genuine follow-up. The email invites readers to visit a web site and answer a few questions before deciding on which fantastic prize they would like to receive. The scam is that participants need to pay a small sum to cover postage, and this involves providing credit card information.

Reporting scams

To report scam emails, forward them to report@phishing.gov.uk.

Useful web sites for news and help

Please click on the blue headings to go to each web site.

[Moseley, Kings Heath and District u3a web site](#)

Our u3a's own web site

[Birmingham Council News](#)

This site provides useful information about council services.

[West Midland Police](#)

Help and support in the local area.

[Moseley Together](#)

Community support and news for Moseley and other general information.
tel 07796 668257

[WM Now](#)

WMNow is a free community messaging system that emails you up-to-date information from police and partners after you have registered.

[Betel](#)

If you have furniture to dispose of Betel will collect it and relocate it to people in need.
Telephone number 01564 822356

[West Midlands u3a](#)

News and information from our regional u3a.

[U3a Found in Nature](#)

Where members can share any photos which are 'wild and interesting'.

[u3a free workshops and courses](#)

Details of free workshops/short courses available free to our members.

[U3a Newsletters](#)

Link to the latest and previous National u3a Newsletters

Contact information

Please ensure that emails sent to the addresses below include 'u3a' in the subject box. Clicking on the email title should open an email to the actual email address.

Interest Group enquiries

Anne James

Groups email

Membership enquiries

Faith Walsh

Membership email

Accounts enquiries

Carey Baff

Accounts email

Newsletter

Ken Fisher

Communications email

General enquires

Ray Tier

Enquiries email

Social events

Janet Burgess

Events email

Your Executive Committee

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| ● Chair | Ray Tier |
| ● Vice Chair | Ken Fisher |
| ● Business & Communications Secretary | Cormac Quigley |
| ● Treasurer | Carey Baff |
| ● Interest Group Co-ordinator | Anne James |
| ● Membership Secretary | Faith Walsh |
| ● Social Events Secretary | Janet Burgess |
| ● Member | Heather Lawrence |