

## **SUB-COMMITTEES**

### **Activities Sub-Committee Report**

We started 2020 with a great programme of events to look forward to.

After the Annual lunch in January, we held an Afternoon tea for all Committee and Group Coordinators in February.

However lockdown forced the cancellation of a members' open morning, a wine tasting, and our Summer outing. Plans for a U3A day in June and a Summer BBQ plus a Christmas tree festival have been shelved. The Thursford Spectacular has been postponed by the company until 2021 with new tickets due to be sent to us in December. 14 of us got together on Warren Hill, bringing our own chairs for a chat. We are just waiting to start again. I would like to personally thank Di, Rosemary, Anne, Denise, Steve and Kath and Tim for working with me.

*Niddy Walpole*

### **Publicity Sub-Committee Report**

The Publicity Team, which comprises Barry Coles, Stephanie Ellington, John Herring, Chris Timmins and myself, reassessed how communication with the membership could be updated and improved and perhaps made more entertaining, particularly with the restrictions imposed by Coronavirus. The challenges were to update the Newsletter and website presentation; increase the Facebook group membership; increase use of the website and generally use more electronic communication methods.

The early activity was focussed on the Newsletter which we substantially changed to a glossier quarterly magazine look and feature more group activity articles and pictures, together with links to the website. Of course the challenge from Coronavirus was how not only to maintain communications with the membership and provide updates on any activities, but also to encourage more inclusiveness in the content by inviting members to send in their own thoughts and contributions. We felt during lockdown that we also needed to increase the frequency of the Newsletter (which changed into ENews) and so there was, initially, a bi-weekly issue. Clearly this could only be managed electronically so to ensure we included those members who were unable to receive the E-News, we were grateful for Committee and Group Coordinators for printing and hand delivering the updates. This will continue until a return to 'normality' (whatever that will look like) although the frequency has dropped from bi-weekly to monthly.

The drive to increase membership of our Facebook page has seen an almost four-fold increase in the last 12 months - there's still a long way to go to get more but it has been gratifying to see members keep in touch, explore new ideas, send updates on their gardens and other activities and generally embrace this method of communication as well and keep in touch. The website usage has also increased substantially as Group Co-ordinators have done a sterling job of keeping their various groups involved and active. Some great examples of this are the History, Drama, Music and Camera groups among many others.

Finally we have been using regular other email updates to keep members informed of any substantial U3A news and messages. The Coronavirus challenges keep getting in the way of getting back to meeting in person but the Publicity Team believe that, given the circumstances, we have managed to overcome a number of obstacles and keep the Newmarket U3A membership as informed and involved as we can. Our thanks go out to all those members and co-ordinators who have sent in their contributions and we hope to continue (and possibly enhance) this over the coming year.

*Nigel Day*

### **Resources Sub-Committee Report**

The Resources Sub-committee covers both financial and other resources such as the rooms we hire and equipment purchased for use by the various groups.

The subcommittee comprises Joan Watkinson, Grace Crump and Liz Langley with me as chair. Tim Young also attends meetings in his capacity as Chair of the Executive committee.

We have in the past few months been looking at the Finance policy and recommending a sum to be held in reserve to cover operational costs and ongoing maintenance of equipment. We have also proposed that meeting fees be standardised for all group meetings.

Our main work has been investigating the process we need to follow to allow your U3A to claim Gift Aid on the annual subscription. The response to our recent question about whether members are willing for us to claim gift aid showed that the majority of you are. This means we can proceed in the knowledge that the sum we can claim in the coming years will make a valuable contribution to the U3A funds, helping us keep down the cost to you.

Membership Secretary Cheryl Bampton has recently joined the subcommittee to ensure the close liaison with the Treasurer that will be needed when the scheme is put into operation.

*Kath Gifkins*

## **ACTIVITY GROUP REPORTS**

### **Antiques**

We were half way through our year when lockdown happened. David Palmer had recently moved to Peterborough, so his wife Mary was pleased to get several moving in jobs done and dusted!. If there are two of you willing to step into Linda and my shoes, to run Antiques please contact me

*Niddy Walpole*

## 2nd Tuesday

This was a new venture, 'piggybacked' on to Model Making on a Tuesday morning. A range of activities was planned, including a one-hour documentary film, IT support, questions to committee members and, of course, coffee. The organisers provided a range of 'coffee table books' for members to browse over the coffee. Three meetings were held before the lockdown. The system seemed to work and a number of members availed themselves of the activities provided. The nature of the activities mean that they cannot be transferred to any other medium and the group is currently not meeting.

*Tim Young*

## Camera Group

The group is run by four co-ordinators, Barry Coles as primary contact, Kath Gifkins, Chris Timmins and John Herring. I would like to thank the other co-ordinators for all the work they do in leading the meetings. Thanks must also be expressed to Phil Boggie for his continued support in his role as archivist for our group. In March 2020 we had 25 active members. The year 2019-2020 has turned out to be a very exceptional year for everyone due to the Covid-19 virus and all U3A group meetings were cancelled from late March, although we had been able to meet on the 2 March. The group had planned a few events for spring 2020 but these also had to be cancelled.

In 2020 the monthly photo competitions continued to be well supported. In May we tried our first online photo competition via a private website link, and these are still running monthly. This seems to have worked very well with good entry levels. The members in the website competition submit two photos as they would normally do at Tesco's but this is all carried out electronically and anonymously until the results are announced. After the competition closing date, members can then vote for their selected photo online. Winners are announced by email and also appear in the next online edition of E-News.

In September and October 2019 and in March 2020 we staged Exhibitions in Newmarket Library. In September it featured a promotion for our U3A, showing details of all the groups' that were running at that time. The library reported back that the exhibitions had been well received by members of the public. Unfortunately the exhibition which opened on 3 March had to be curtailed because of the lockdown later that month.

The Afternoon Tea which was scheduled for May 2020 will hopefully be able to take place sometime in 2021. Unfortunately no meetings in person are planned for the time being.

*Barry Coles*

## Carpet Bowls Group

The group meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month at 10.30 in the Exning Road Club.

Until Lockdown in March the numbers attending remained at 16 to 24 people each session. Sadly we had lost some of our regular bowlers but were pleased to have welcomed half a dozen complete novices who show promise.

Once again 22 bowlers enjoyed a midweek bowling break last November at Potters Holiday Village in Norfolk proudly wearing their royal blue polo shirts embroidered with the U3A logo. We are all looking forward to exercising the bowling arms when we are allowed to resume post Covid.

*Alan and Kath Gifkins*

### **Discussion Group**

Regrettably the activities of the discussion group in 2020 have been curtailed by the COVID 19 virus precautions. This friendly group which met at Newmarket day centre on the 3rd Tuesday of the month had just resumed from a break for the festive season and new year when COVID lockdown interrupted matters. Both in terms of closure of the meeting venue at the day centre and for members needing to shield according to government advice. It has not been possible and for the foreseeable future remains unlikely that meetings will be able to be resumed. The group had been discussing "A vision of Newmarket town centre" a report which had been completed to look at how the town centre could be rejuvenated. This may remain a relevant topic once COVID precautions are finally able to be lifted.

*Ann Lay and John Herring*

### **Drama Group**

In September 2019, the group began work on the now annual Christmas presentation. It was decided that, although we had learned much from our '1918' production, it was not very suitable as a Christmas entertainment and so the group sought humorous dramatic interludes. The finished piece was quite a polished piece of work but due to pressure and other commitments, the work was only performed twice, firstly as a drop-in event in Tesco, where it was only moderately successful and to our membership at Exning Road Club. This performance worked well and was enjoyed by the audience. In January 2020 we began to prepare for our next performance and had held three meetings before lockdown. The group then moved to Zoom and did some very useful work on radio play scripts.

The group was hoping to move to live meetings as lockdown was relaxed but unfortunately, after two meetings this has had to end.

*Tim Young*

### **French Conversation**

After meeting in person for the first three months of the year, the French Conversation class has continued in a small way with written challenges emailed around each month. We're not sure when we'll be able to actually converse face to face again but it's been interesting finding out more about each other in written rather than spoken French.

*Alison Giles*

## **Garden Group**

The group meets at 2.30 on the third Wednesday of the month in the Exning Road Club.

Between August last year and our last meeting in February attendance remained at 30-40 per meeting.

In August 2019 we took a coach to Eltham Palace, where we enjoyed not only the gardens but the magnificent interior of the palace too. In September we used the Gredley bus to take us to the Beth Chatto Gardens where we were given an introductory talk by a guide before wandering around getting inspiration for our own plots and buying plants of course.

Between then and our final meeting in February, we were told about Fantastic Food Plants and hardy geraniums, given ideas on how to rethink our gardens, and had a very informative Question Time with our old friend Barry Gayton.

Unfortunately Covid put paid to plans to have an afternoon tea at Twentypence Nursery, visits to the Woburn Flower Show and Waddesdon Manor.

Luckily most of the speakers we have had to cancel this year have been willing to rebook for 2021.

During lockdown members have been encouraged to take a wander around their own garden at the beginning of each month, take pictures and post them on Facebook and we have had a chat 'over the garden fence' via zoom. Unfortunately due to lack of interest we had to abandon the idea of small garden meetings and it looks as if plans for a remote plant sale will go the same way too.

*Kath Gifkins & Rosemary Foreman*

## **Gredley Bus**

Our U3A continues to benefit from use of the Gredley Trust mini bus with groups travelling free of charge to various places of interest.

Since the AGM in July 2019, visits have included those to Beth Chatto Gardens by the Garden Group, the walking group went to St Ives in October with Wings Wheels and Water along with the Model Making Group going to Duxford in November. There was trip to Milton Keynes for shopping in January and the Arts Appreciation group visited the Sainsbury Centre in February. Unfortunately trips planned by the Drama Group, Realm of Books, Music Appreciation and Discussion groups fell foul of Lockdown.

Our thanks go to the Gredley Trust once more for allowing us to continue to use this much appreciated facility.

*Kath Gifkins*

## **History Group**

Thank you to all who have read my little stories and done the quizzes that are on our webpage. There are several talks on my table waiting for whenever we return to as near as normal a schedule. I am attempting to get with technology and do Zoom talks starting

on Friday 2nd October at 2.30pm. These will be shorter to keep to the time slots. This will be Royal weddings through the ages.

A big thank you to those doing research on Burwell and to Angie for proof reading our efforts for us. The completed booklets will be handed over to you in the very near future. It will be on our page in due course.

*Niddy Walpole*

### **Lunch Group**

Since the last Annual General Meeting in 2019 until the lockdown in March 2020 the Lunch Group had attended several varied venues in and around Newmarket, all of these being very well supported with new members joining us at each month. The average number of attendees at each of these meetings being 25.

Gradually we are all able to start going out and about again and we are now looking forward to the time when we can continue to meet again and enjoy our time together, so in the meantime please put your thinking caps on and let us know of any new or different venues you would like to try and we will see what we can arrange when that time comes. Please continue to stay safe, well and cheerful and we hope it will not be long before we can enjoy our time together.

*Brenda and Mike Hastings*

### **Mah Jong Group**

Due to the Corona virus pandemic we have been unable to hold any Mah Jong meetings since February this year. Sadly it does not look very promising for the near future. Unfortunately it is not a game that can be played online as not everyone has a Mah Jong set. As soon as is possible we will start a new season which we look forward to very much.

*Iris Boggie*

### **M3A Music**

This is a popular music group which started in January and met twice before the lockdown. Eight members attended, playing guitars, ukuleles and drums. They began work on a number of quite straight-forward songs, making good use of the sound system bought by the committee. This group met at Gracewell Care home Annex in Kentford where we had generously been lent a large space at no charge. Needless to say, at lockdown this group ceased. There has been much discussion on the performance of music on Zoom and basically, without advanced electronic equipment the App does not perform satisfactorily.

*Tim Young*

## **Model Making Group**

The model making group was building up a reasonably healthy membership, along with the other 2nd Tuesday groups. Sadly since March we have been unable to have our meetings at ERC. Unfortunately, model making is not something that can be done online and so we will have to wait until such time that we can meet up, but I think it will be some time before that happens. However, I am sure that our intrepid model makers have not been idle during lockdown, I know that I haven't. Happy modelling all!

*Phil Boggie*

## **Music Appreciation Group**

It's hard to remember that we had meetings in 2019. Subjects such as 20th century composers (Richard) , from solo artist through to a hundred performers (Mike) , The Savoy Operas (Judy) as well as other subjects long forgotten.

When Lockdown began we tried to keep interest going by creating short snippets of musical items, tackling the intricacies of Youtube creation and bumping into Copyright issues along the way. There are now 17 such items on our group web page with contributions from all three of us. We are fortunate that most of our members have email accounts so we can keep in touch. Members have also received a couple of e-cards to show we are thinking of them.

When we meet again in person there are two programmes ready to go from March and April 2019.

*Mike Jocelyn*

## **Realm of Books**

The Realm of Books group normally meets on the 4th Friday of each month at All Saints Church in Newmarket. We have on average 15 attendees, depending on the time of the year - and the weather.

However, everything changed due to the lockdown following the outbreak of the Coronavirus in March 2020. As our March meeting had to be cancelled, reviews for the books we were expecting to discuss by Kamilla Shansie were sent to me via email. These were also sent to the group members and posted on the website under "Covid-19 Book Group". We have been continuing with this each month.

By July we had compiled a list of the books we would be reading for the next few months, starting with "Waterland" by Graham Swift and "The Bookshop" by Penelope Fitzgerald. A small number of the Realm of Books Group had a garden meeting on a sunny July day and this was followed by our first Zoom meeting the following week. We are continuing with our successful and enjoyable Zoom meetings until such a time when we can meet again.

The full list of our current authors and our reviews can be found on our website or you can get details by contacting Margaret on 01638 615252.

*Margaret Jocelyn*

### **Rummikub**

We have a good attendance at our Rummikub meetings usually of about 9-12 people and with growing popularity we had 20 participants at our last meeting in February 2020. We saw quite a few new members in January and February who came along to try the game. Unfortunately as sharing of tiles is necessary at each table we were unable to continue following the pandemic restrictions, but hope very much we can restart with just as much enthusiasm when we are able to meet again.

*Rose Baxter*

### **Scrabble**

Up to the onset of 'lockdown' in March we had a very consistent number of members attending and enjoying our monthly meetings.

Unfortunately, due to the very nature of the game, it looks as though we may be one of the last Groups able to restart.

We hope that you are all fit and well, and eager to return when we are allowed.

*Janet Neville & Liz Langley*

### **Speaker Meetings**

What changes! I had thought the calendar was fully booked, so anyone taking my place would not have too onerous a job. Now we are doing internet Zoom meetings, still on the last Monday of the month. It is just a case of clicking on the link that is sent out to you to join in at 2.28 for the 2.30pm start and at no cost to you. Do try it.

*Niddy Walpole*

### **Walking**

Up until February, our numbers had continued to grow and there were often more than 20 walkers enjoying the walks and, of course, the lunches afterwards. Led by various members, walks took place around Cavenham Heath, Cheveley/Ashley, Borough Green, Landwade, Barton Mills and Woodditton/Cheveley. Members also enjoyed a trip on the Gredley bus to St Ives.

Following the easing of some of the lockdown restrictions, Kath and Alan led a walk round West Stow Country Park in August and another one on 2nd September at Ely. As I am no longer able to join in the walks, we are looking for more members to lead them on an occasional basis – please let me know if you are willing to do this, possibly once or twice a year.

*Rosemary Foreman*



## **Wings, Wheels & Water**

The group continued with the regular monthly meetings, consisting of a presentation by the Co-ordinator, followed by questions, discussion and coffee. However, in the Autumn, Steve Garner, a member of the group, offered to do a short presentation, following up on 'homework' about an interesting and relevant visit during the summer. This was received very well, and he subsequently presented two more fascinating talks relating to his visits to Orkney.

I am delighted to report that Steve is now co co-ordinator of the group and he and I are alternating monthly presentations on Zoom.

During the lockdown, we did our best to present our group members with interesting matters on the website. These took a good deal of work and were only visited by a limited number of members of the group. There was information, quizzes and presentations. As restrictions continued into the 2020-2021 year, we took the decision to revert to our regular monthly meetings on the same dates and times but on the Zoom App.

In November, 14 members of the group used a Gredley outing to visit IWM Duxford. I gave a brief introduction to the site and a tour of some of the aircraft in the AIRSPACE hangar. Members of the group then spent the rest of the day visiting areas that they identified as particularly interesting.

*Tim Young*