

FEBRUARY 2024

MESSAGE FROM CHRIS NIVEN, CHAIR OF THE NOTTS NETWORK

Dear All,

Happy New Year everyone although it seems like we have been in 2024 a long time. It's February already and the prospect of snow is looming this week. The grandchildren are excited, me less so.

Our January Network meeting was very busy and thank you to all the Nottinghamshire representatives who attended. We also opened the meeting to members from the region as Allan Walmsley Vice Chair of The Third Age Trust delivered a presentation entitled "Fit for the Future" on the proposed changes to the structure of the organisation. If you weren't able to attend the meeting a recording of the presentation is available for all u3a members to view. Here is the link to that recording:

[u3a - Fit for the Future](#) You need to be logged in to the Third Age Trust website to access the video.

May I urge you to read the article on page 2 from Liz Thackray, Chair of the Third Age Trust where she sets out her perspective on the proposal for re-structuring.

More information will be sent out soon and your views are welcome on this matter.

Take care everyone.

Chris Niven

Chair of Nottinghamshire Network

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF NEWSBITES

Please send your articles (keep to a maximum 300-word count)
and good quality photos (as attachments please)
by 7th April 2024 to maria.newsbytes@gmail.com

FIT FOR THE FUTURE – A WORD FROM LIZ THACKRAY, CHAIR OF THE THIRD AGE TRUST

I was disappointed not to be able to join you on 24th January. Unfortunately, I picked up a rather nasty chest infection in London the previous week, while visiting u3as and attending the Board meeting. Fortunately, Allan Walmsley was able to make the presentation and lead the discussion on Fit for the Future. I will not reiterate what he said, but I will provide a little additional background from my perspective and say why I think this proposal is important for the future of the u3a movement.



During the 12 months before I became Chair, two reviews were undertaken. One focused on strategy, updating the development plan for a post-covid world. The other focused on governance. As a new Chair, who had not previously been a member of the u3a Board, I took time to digest the reports and recommendations. I became increasingly aware that change was needed and in March 22 I wrote a 'think piece' for the Board outlining my thinking.

Our current governance structure is essentially that which was established by our founders in the very different world of 1982. Since then, the demands on charity trustees have become more onerous. In the Third Age Trust, our trustees are required to be both charity trustees and company directors. In addition, they undertake two other roles as regional or national representative and first port of call in their region or nation when a u3a requires help or support. This can amount to a full-time job, something few u3a members are willing or able to undertake.

In my 'think piece' I recommended we consider following the example of other similar charities by creating a Board more fitted to fulfilling our legal responsibilities, together with a council that would enable the voices of u3as to be heard and responded to. This was the start of Fit for the Future and a journey to explore what might work best for the u3a. From the start it was clear that the u3a model must be protected. We are a volunteer led mutual aid organisation. But we need to enable members with appropriate knowledge and skills to become Trustees and keep us legal. At the same time member voices are paramount in development activity. And u3as must receive appropriate support when advice is required.

In my election address, I said change would be needed. At the time, I did not know what that might be. It is not u3as that need to change, but the infrastructure needs to be one that enables the voice of u3as to be heard and enables those who volunteer to know they will continue to have time to enjoy their u3a membership as well as using their knowledge and skills to serve the movement.

The background papers and presentation are on the website. Comments are welcome at governance@u3a.org.uk or the u3a Fit for the Future Facebook page.

Liz

GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLES TO NEWSBITES

We are always striving to improve Newsbites and acting on feedback from members about Newsbites being a little too long we are making the following suggestions:

So far as subject matter is concerned we will be particularly pleased to receive articles about any unusual or exceptional event that your u3a may have organised or any new activity that your u3a is running. u3as learn from each other and it is very useful for their members to read about new events or activities that they haven't come across before.

- Please send your text in Word format and keep to a maximum 300-word count.
- Please submit photos as separate attachments in formats JPG, JPEG, PNG or similar (not pdf). They must be of good quality and a minimum of 1MB. No collages please.
- Please ensure that all who feature in your photos have expressed their consent for the photos to appear in Newsbites and also for those photos to be posted on u3a and Network websites.
- Please let me have the name of the author of your article and his/her status e.g. member, group leader, chair etc. I do look on your websites but don't always manage to find a full name or status.

Many thanks

Maria Gabrielczyk – Editor

maria.newsbits@gmail.com



TRIP TO THE PANTOMINE

Bernie had organised for 23 of our members to see Cinderella at the Nottingham Playhouse. She gave out the tickets on the day while we had a drink. We then moved into the auditorium to join three different school parties.

During the performance one of the ugly sisters explained that she was looking for a man and all of the male children raised their hands. The Ugly sister explained that she was looking for "a real man" and pointed to Martin (one of our members) who was sitting on the end of our row. Martin went to the stage and was given a rose. There were several other references to Martin throughout the pantomime. In the second half when they were pulling off the socks of one of the ugly sisters so that they could try on the glass slipper, it was pointed out that something was attached to it. It was a very large pair of pants and they had the name Martin on them.



One of the members emailed this photo of the Panto to Martin's wife who was at home and they wrote under it "For Martin. He had an Unexpected Star role!".

When Martin got home from the pantomime his wife asked which ugly sister he was in the photo. Martin explained to his wife that he was not in the photo but suggested that she

made a visit to an optician.

Tales of Martin's part in the panto were also re-told during the open meeting the next day.

My thanks to Bernie for organising our trip out which we all thoroughly enjoyed.

Martin Holden

Vice Chair and Pantomime Star

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

Nottinghamshire Network of u3as

[Nottinghamshire Network of u3as - Home \(weebly.com\)](http://www.nottinghamshireu3as.com)

BEESTON u3a



Christmas Folk

A very popular visit from the Poppy Folk Club to the Beeston u3a December Open meeting. This group of enthusiasts come together every year to sing the Christmas carols and songs from the Village Carolling and folk repertoire. The songs, many originating in the villages of South Yorkshire and Derbyshire, are NOT the seasonal songs we normally hear (in church, on the radio, etc) and are mostly far older. These days, they are normally sung by village locals in packed pubs, keeping alive a tradition reaching back well over two hundred years.

Beeston u3a members enjoyed the entertainment along with plenty of tea and cake!

Another Beeston u3a Ceilidh

In October, the Chilwell Memorial Hall was packed for another successful Ceilidh. Dancing, interspersed with fish and chips. Great company, good food and energetic dancing!



Karen Attwood
Publicity Officer

COTGRAVE & DISTRICT u3a

COTGRAVE & DISTRICT u3a CELEBRATES ITS 10th ANNIVERSARY

On 5th December 2023, over 100 members of Cotgrave & District u3a gathered together at the Welfare in Cotgrave to celebrate the success of the organisation since it started in December 2013. One of the organisers, Paul Childs (Vice Chairman), was MC for the event and the retiring Honorary President, Barbara Bullin, welcomed all those attending.

The very talented Art and Knit & Natter Groups displayed some of their wonderful creations, and the entertainment was provided by Susan Hillyard, who sang a song she had written which mentioned all of the groups in the organisation, 11 members from the Line Dancing Group and the Singing for Fun Group, who sang a hearty version of South Australia.

Peter Binder, who joined in 2014, gave a brief talk about the history and growth of the organisation from its start with just 30 members to its present size of 219 active members.



After being refreshed by prosecco and cake, thanks were expressed to Maureen Johnson and Chris Tomlin who had organised everything. The consensus was that the event had been hugely successful with everyone looking forward to more celebrations to come.

Christine Tomblin
Committee member

ASHFIELD u3a

Happy New Year!

Members of the Ashfield u3a are again gearing up after the Christmas break. We now have 48 interest groups running and plans have been made for a holiday in Exmouth in March and a St. George's Day Celebration and Ploughman's Supper to be held in April.

Members of our Thread and Fibres Group are certainly looking forward as they made some early Easter egg decorations at their last meeting.

Our Sugarcraft Group were also busy at their December meeting making what they describe as a 'blast from the past' and produced a range of marzipan fruits. They had already made Christmas cake decorations, poinsettia flowers and model figures.



So, if you are looking for interesting things to do – Ashfield u3a is not short of opportunities.

Val Scott

RAINWORTH & DISTRICT u3a

Rainworth and District u3a members enjoyed several outings and events to round off 2023 and start 2024.

A visit to Leeds Christmas Market was well supported as was a Christmas Carol Concert by Mansfield and District Male Voice Choir along with the Choir of St Philip Neri Church which was performed at the Church. The annual Christmas lunch held at the Hostess Banqueting Suite was enjoyed by over 50 members, it is always a popular event and names are put down well in advance!

A visit to the National Memorial Arboretum for the Illuminated Walk was an enjoyable trip even though the weather was awful.



Fortunately, we were all suitably dressed so the rain didn't stop us from doing the walk which took about one and a quarter hours. Coffee and hot chocolate or a sneaky glass

of wine was very welcome at the end! As very often happens, as we set off home at about 7.30 p.m. the rain stopped and the drive back was so much easier for our driver, Chris.

Our own Christmas Party was a success and the catering team provided us with a tasty lunch which was preceded by an interesting monologue given by The Honourable Mrs Victor Bruce on women drivers in 1928. The Ringtones entertained us with a number of festive songs, some we could sing along with.



The Garden Group visited the beautifully decorated Belvoir Castle the theme being the 12 days of Christmas.

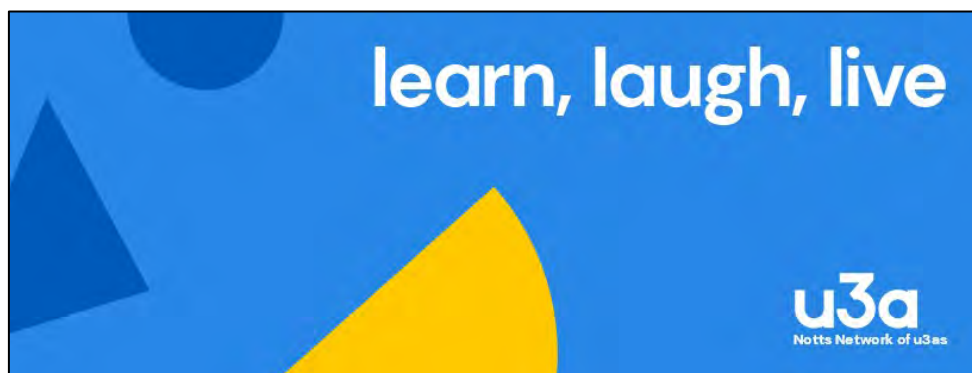


The Christmas Spectacular at Thursford was a hit with members, so much so that the wheels are in motion for another visit in December 2024!



Twenty seven members enjoyed an afternoon tea at Planters Brookfields Garden Centre in January and various events are already planned for the coming year.

Colin and Jackie Massey



MAPPERLEY & DISTRICT u3a

When Covid hit and we all took to Zoom for our meetings the MaD (Mapperley and District) Wine Appreciation Group decided to hold their meetings via Zoom as well – and so the MaD Wine Bar was opened. It proved to be very popular and when we were able to meet in person again we decided to keep the Wine Bar open on the weeks when we didn't meet physically.



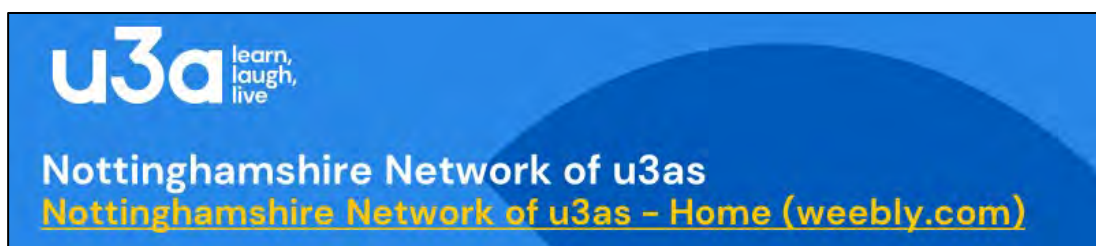
We have a different theme for every Wine Bar session – eg a specific grape or country – and we each get a bottle of wine to fit that week's theme, then when we meet via Zoom we take turns to talk about the wine we've chosen, where we bought it, the cost and its characteristics etc and whether or not we'd buy it again. One of us will make notes of that week's wines and these are circulated to everyone so that we have a record of what has been particularly recommended to buy, or to avoid!

After everyone has described their wine we usually view a short YouTube film related to the wine style of the week.

It's a lively and enjoyable group and we're learning about as well as enjoying some delicious wines.

Hopefully the Wine Bar will stay open for a long time to come.

Sue Cullen



EASTWOOD u3a

Myrtle, one of our Eastwood and District members, was 100 on 5th January! She attended the monthly meeting where the congratulations announcement was made. She had a family celebration and a cake made by one of the u3a members which



was presented at the Creative Crafts, KnitAid group which she attends. In the group Myrtle knits items which are donated to various charities; currently we are sending many items to Ukraine.



The highlight of her celebration was an acknowledgement from the King and Queen.

We are putting out a challenge – does any other U3A have a member who has made this great achievement?

Anne Steel



WOLLATON u3a

Wollaton u3a Craft Group have created this lovely banner cloth for us to use on our Reception tables at our Main Meetings and Coffee Mornings.

We think that it is an excellent way to greet our members and tell potential members who we are.



Sarah Spilsbury
Chair

ARNOLD u3a

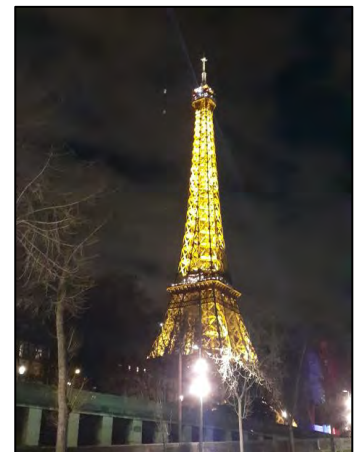
Paris Tour with Van Gogh Exhibition

Twelve u3a members have very recently returned from a four day visit to Paris. We chose the end of January because the special Van Gogh exhibition ran until the 4th February.

We travelled by train from Nottingham and then Eurostar to Gare de Lyon. Our hotel was in the fifth arrondissement close to the Latin Quarter and Luxembourg Gardens. This location was a major plus point for the trip as it was close to major tourist sites and there were a large number of bars/restaurants nearby for our evening meals.



Activities included on the trip were tickets to the Van Gogh exhibition at the Musee d'Orsay, tickets on the Big Bus with its tour of central Paris, a River Seine cruise with dinner and wine, a private guided tour of Montmartre and a coach to Versailles. We were exceptionally lucky with the weather and the fact that the whole itinerary went without a hitch.



This trip was organised on our behalf by a private tour operator who was excellent, engaging with us at every opportunity and answering all our questions.

I am sure that a similar trip could be organised to a different exhibition. If anyone would like to discuss this further please contact Rosie Allen from Arnold u3a.

Rosie Allen



STAPLEFORD & DISTRICT u3a

A QUIET VOLUNTEER

In April 2023 the Third Age Trust, in planning the June Volunteers Week, suggested that Branches might consider celebrating “the positive contribution volunteers can make to the lives of other members”.



For some time a few Stapleford u3a members had been meeting at a fortnightly Acrylic Painting Group run by Sheila Hart – a talented but modest amateur herself – at her home. Sheila’s hospitality and her sensitive encouragement create an environment where everyone flourishes. Members may not create great masterpieces, but Sheila generously shares not only all the materials they might need, but her own knowledge and expertise (and sustaining drinks and food) with everyone. Total beginners, and lifetime “closet painters” like me, learn all the time in an atmosphere of friendship and laughter, sometimes producing surprisingly satisfactory results!



Referring to Sheila as “A Quiet Volunteer in Nottinghamshire” I contacted Nelly (Eleanor) Mair, u3a Communications Officer, who reacted with enthusiasm. Members of the group agreed to being filmed and, in late September film-maker Tasha (Natasha) Jarvis arrived one Monday, putting us all at our ease as she moved unobtrusively around the room and we carried on as normal.

Sheila preferred not to “front” the film, which had an unexpected result. They’ve called it “Meet Marion” – very embarrassing – but make no mistake, Sheila is definitely the star of the Stapleford u3a Painting Group.

The film can be watched on youtube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wbe6XqnwhEo>

Marion Edwards

NEWARK & DISTRICT u3a

PUB LUNCH & QUIZ GROUP

It was a chance comment by a couple of members of how much they'd enjoyed a quiz evening recently, coinciding with another member saying how much they missed dining out since being widowed which sowed the seeds of an idea for a new group.

After a chat with the friendly landlord of a local pub who agreed to the use one of his two bars, the "Pub Lunch & Quiz" group was born.



The idea of the group is simple. Once a month we meet up to enjoy a tasty pub lunch combined with a quiz consisting of thirty general knowledge questions compiled by the group leader. There are no prizes & absolutely no "naming & shaming", just the chance to enjoy a pleasant lunch out with like-minded people.

Members can choose to play the quiz alone, make up a team or partner up with their nearest & dearest. Whichever the preference, the aim is to have fun!

The group now has well over a hundred members, with each month around fifty-five of them coming along to join in the fun. Which all goes to prove that if there's something members enjoy but which isn't readily on offer to them, with a bit of thought a new group can be formed.

Maggie George
Chairman & Pub Lunch & Quiz Group Leader

RAVENSHEAD u3a

At Ravenshead u3a we are trying out some new ideas in 2024.

First of these are our new "Bite Sized Sessions".

Recognising that many of our members have little time available to join another Group, and that not everyone wishes to commit to running an Interest Group on a long-term basis, we decided that one individual



session or a short series of sessions over a few weeks be introduced as a new concept. They can be an opportunity to learn a new skill or just to socialise in a small group of like-minded members to discuss various issues and topics – nothing is off the table (as long as it's legal!). They may be educational, special interest, study groups or anything else that takes our members' fancy (provided it's within u3a guidelines of course!).

After floating the concept in January, we received quite a bit of interest and have our first Bite-Size Session running in March, a one-off Tai-Chi Workshop.

A session or series of sessions is promoted for booking in full up-front, and when critical mass is achieved to make it viable, the session or sessions are confirmed and take place.



Meanwhile, we have one exciting new interest group, the Finnish skittle type game of "MOLKKY".

This game is played outdoors on a variety of surfaces and involves underarm throwing (from a distance of 3-4 metres) of a wooden skittle to knock down a set of 12 other skittles! It sounds easy but

The role of Speaker Finder can sometimes be fraught with unexpected surprises. After the scheduled speaker for our January Meeting withdrew at short notice, Judith Moore was able to line up Dave Richards, who attracted a bumper member turnout for his excellent talk 'Richard III - Mystery Man - the Bones in the Car Park'.



John Butler
Chair



TRIPS, HOLIDAYS AND EVENTS, OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS OF NOTTS u3as

If your u3a is organising a trip, holiday or other event which you would like to open up to other u3a members please send promotional details for inclusion in this special section of Newsbites.

Torquay

Coach Holiday

2 Excursions

ONLY
£355
pp

Leaves 28th September for 5 days

Join us for an Alfa Travel Coach Holiday to the English Riviera

Accommodation will be 5 day / 4 night Half Board at the **Metropole Hotel, Torquay**, which is located within a few minutes walk of the harbour, marina, seafront with its sandy beaches and the town centre shopping area.

The Metropole Hotel features a bar, extensive lobby, lounge, and a large entertainment room. A full Leisureplex menu plus the Chef's nightly specials are served in the bright, airy dining room.

All guest bedrooms are en-suite and feature Freeview TV and tea/coffee making facilities. Rooms are mainly Double or Twin beds, and your preference should be stated on booking. A very small number of single rooms are available. Seaview rooms are available for a supplement of £35.

Included in the itinerary is one day at your leisure in Torquay, and two full-day coach excursions.

We will be visiting **Plymouth**, the famous maritime City with its historic Barbican district, Hoe & Sound, and **Teignmouth**, the Gem of South Devon, with its pier and Georgian architecture.

A Deposit of £50 pp is payable upon booking. **Contact Halinka Rajchel, Ravenshead u3a's Trips Coordinator** to book your place, and bring cheques made out to "Alfa Travel" to a Ravenshead u3a Monthly Meeting or a Weekenders Group meeting. You can also deliver or post cheques to Halinka at an address she will advise. There is an option to pay Alfa Travel directly by bank transfer/credit/debit card, but speak to Halinka in the first instance to book.

Alfa Travel Limited are an employee owned company based in Chesterfield, and are members of the Bonded Travel Organisers Trust ABTOT
They are a company registered in England and Wales with company number 02326610.
Their registered office is at Alfa Building, Euxton Lane, Euxton, Chorley, Lancashire, PR7 6AF.
See their Booking Conditions at <https://www.alfatravel.co.uk/booking-conditions> including a Travel Insurance requirement
See their Travellers Rights Statement at <https://www.alfatravel.co.uk/traveller-rights/>

**Contact Halinka Rajchel on 07762 802112
or email her at trips@ravensheadu3a.org.uk**



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE NETWORK OF u3as



Allan Walmsley national Vice Chair of the Third Age Trust delivers the presentation



The Notts Network meeting on 24 January when Allan Walmsley national Vice Chair of the Third Age Trust addressed the hybrid meeting which included representatives from East Midlands about "Fit For The Future", the proposal for change of structure in the Trust.

The presentation was recorded and you can view it by using this link:

[u3a - Fit for the Future](#)

You need to be logged in to the Third Age Trust website to access the video.



Notts Network Chair Chris Niven welcomes all participants

NEWS FROM THE THIRD AGE TRUST

Did you know there are over 80 national 'subject advisers' who can help your interest group. What is an adviser? Advisers are passionate u3a members who want to grow their subject and share their knowledge within the u3a movement.

Who can contact them? Any u3a member can contact a Subject Adviser. They are here to support any member or group leader with an interest in their subject, whether you have a group or not.

When can I contact them? Anytime – you do not need to wait until your group is stuck for ideas, you can get contact them for resources, to connect with others, to energise your group or just to get inspired!

Go to the Third Age Trust website and look under "Learn"

FREE ONLINE LEARNING EVENTS

Did you know that membership of your u3a entitles you to access free online talks, workshops and courses offered by The Third Age Trust? Just go to: www.u3a.org.uk You must be registered with the Trust and logged in, a very easy and quick process. Once on the site look for these and other opportunities under 'Events'.

Most sessions are presented by members, sharing their knowledge or skills with others across the movement.

Here are just some of the exciting events coming up in the next few weeks – ALL FREE TO JOIN:



'Safe bind, safe find': locks and keys

An account of locks and keys from Sumer to Silicon Valley, by Richard of Penicuik u3a

Wed 14 Feb at 2pm

Free – Online via zoom



Cryptic Crosswords in Context

Their history, how they work, who does them and why – a talk by u3a Cryptic Crosswords subject adviser Henry Howarth

Thurs 15 Feb at 10am

Free – online via zoom



Mindfulness and Meditation Continuation Sessions – From December 23 – May 24

Join us each month as we continue the practices introduced in the Mindfulness and Meditation Series, and introduce new ones.

Next session: Thurs 15 Feb at 10am

Free – online via zoom



David Hockney and the Theatre

Through sound and video, art historian Peter Webb brings Hockney's theatre to life

Fri 23 Feb at 2pm

Free – Online via Zoom



Science Network Event

Join our Science Network meeting to hear talks on Pathogenics and Botany

Tues 27 Feb at 9.30am

Free – Online via zoom



Laughter Yoga with Merrie Maggie (Jan-Apr)

Bring more joy and laughter to your life with Laughter Yoga – an aerobic exercise with playful exercises combined with deep yogic breathing.

Next session: Tues 27 Feb at 3.30pm

Free – Online via Zoom



Advances in Public Health Talk 1 of 5: The Role and Tragedy of Semmelweis

Please wash your hands it can save lives – the role and tragedy of Dr Ignaz Semmelweis. Talk 1 of 5 by Mike Trevethick of Thanet u3a.

Wed 28 Feb at 10am

Free – Online via Zoom



More Number Fun with Dr Knott

Join Dr Ron Knott for a talk on what the ancient Egyptians can teach us about maths

Thurs 29 Feb at 10am

Free – Online via Zoom



Secrets of the Human Brain: Talk Two: Sleep and Dreams

This talk explains how our brains make us awake or asleep and can make us dream, by Dr. Bob Pullen of Prudhoe u3a.

Thurs 29 Feb at 2pm

Free – Online via Zoom



**Aviation Network Meeting:
Time is money, Concorde
was Prestige**

In this meeting of the u3a Aviation Network, Capt John Hutchinson shares his 15 years of experience as a British Airways Concorde Captain

Tuesday 5 March at 10am

Free - online via Zoom



Artificial Intelligence News

Are you interested in learning about AI? Join others discovering the world of AI, hosted by Barry Claydon, u3a AI Subject Adviser.

Thursday 7 March at 3.30pm

Free - online via Zoom



**Exploring World Faiths:
Women in Faith**

International Women's Day occurs on March 8th. We will explore the roles of women in different faiths. Hosted by Dr Peter Rookes, u3a Subjec Adviser.

Monday 11 March at 10am

Free - online via Zoom

U3A

156 Blackfriars Road
London, UK
SE1 8EN

Contact the National Office

Tel: 020 8466 6139

Email: info@u3a.org.uk

u3a.org.uk

twitter.com/u3a_uk

facebook.com/u3auk

Many thanks to all the Nottinghamshire members who have submitted articles about their u3as. This is your newsletter and it wouldn't exist without your many contributions.

Please submit your text in Word and your photographs as separate attachments in JPG, PNG or similar format. A photograph always tells a good story!

Please keep within the 300-word count.

And if your u3a is organising an event, trip or holiday which you would like to share with other Nottinghamshire u3a members or maybe you have a few places to fill or a few tickets to sell, then this is the place to promote them.

maria.newsbytes@gmail.com