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From Your New Chairman.

Chris Bowerman Says

Hello

One of the questions anyone giving up full time employment will ask themselves is what will I do with all this spare time? This question certainly crossed my mind. I realised catching up on house decoration, gardening etc. was not going to fill a whole period of retirement. I also wondered how I would get on without the day-to-day contact with the many people with whom I had worked.

As much by good luck as good judgement I heard about u3a a few years before I decided to retire and thought then perhaps joining would be something I should consider. Well, I took the plunge. My first contact was with the Soar Valley Singers (the u3a singing group).

At the time Covid restrictions meant that the group could not meet in person and singing efforts were organised through Zoom. Though it is not terribly exciting singing on your own to a computer screen, it was apparent that Soar Valley u3a was a friendly bunch and made me feel at home very quickly. I was already feeling that the u3a might meet many of my aspirations for retirement.

As it became easier to meet in person, I was able to consider other opportunities. With a lifelong interest in photography, joining the photo group seemed a good option.

Although the last 35 years of my working life had been spent training managers in a variety of businesses and organisations, my educational background and early career was in science. After gaining a degree in Physiology and Biochemistry of Farm animals from Reading University, I moved to the East Midlands. For the next 16 years I

worked in the animal feed industry.

My historic interest in science was rekindled through the u3a Science & Technology and the Engineering & Innovation groups, both of which I joined.

Away from u3a I enjoy woodwork and travel and boating. As well as being a member of the u3a singing group, I also sing with the Ruddington and District Choral Society.

During the Summer my wife and I like to get away and stay in our caravan which we keep in Spain.

I joined the u3a committee a couple of years ago and somehow, when I wasn't looking, ended up as chairman. I must learn to keep my head down!

Soar Valley u3a is a thriving organisation and I hope that during my time as your chairman we continue to thrive. As I mentioned in my summary of our last committee meeting, if you have any ideas for making Soar an even better organisation than it already is, I would love to hear from you.

If we have not already met I look forward to saying hello in person at a future u3a event.

Chris

Groups News

Andrew Davidson plans to start a new **Walking Group** for members who would like to walk in the gentler hills and valleys of Derbyshire and nearby locations. This would fill the gap left when nobody was able to take over Peter Bloxham's excellent walking group.

We would walk once per month, on the third Thursday, starting at a pub or cafe to which we would return in time for lunch. We would meet at 9.45 and set off at 10am with the aim of finishing at 1pm. We would allow 20 minutes for coffee. The length of the walks would be about 6 miles.

Walks would be a little more challenging than those of walking group 2, with no specific restrictions on stiles, but we would avoid steep and long ascents and scrambles.

I would wish to share the planning and leading of walks between as many members as possible and produce a rota after the first few walks, but it would be up to individuals to decide if they

wished to share in this task. You would be welcome just to come and walk.

We would not necessarily cancel walks for inclement weather but would cancel if extreme weather were forecast, such as in Met Office red and amber warnings.

I hope we might do our first walk in August or October; I cannot make it in September.

If you would like to join us, please email or phone me, and provide me with your own email and mobile phone number, plus an emergency contact number of someone you would wish me to call if you were to become unwell during a walk.

For safety reasons, these walks would not be suitable for you to bring your dog.

*Please contact **Andrew Davidson**,
Tel: 07970 480817
Email: andrewdavidson7@hotmail.co.uk*

A new **Dog Owners Group** has now been formed with five members so far, but more are welcome. The group meets on Mondays once a month for walks with dogs allowing the dogs to socialise with each other. Future activities could

include visits to dog training assistance venues.

*Please contact **Rosemary Alltree**,
Tel: 01509 844381
Email: rosemariealltree@yahoo.co.uk*

The long established **History Group** (formerly History2, but now this is the only history group) organises monthly trips by car to venues with a broadly historic connection such as grand houses, museums and villages. Most trips are relatively local; some are further afield within a maximum car travel distance of around an hour or so. Usually guided tours are arranged.

ideally car drivers. The group contact Maggie Ingram, based in East Leake, is wheelchair bound with her own specialised vehicle and a volunteer driver would be much appreciated. (Such a driver normally qualifies for free entry to most venues.)

*Please contact **Maggie Ingram**,
Tel: 01509 853269
Email: maggie@ingram39.plus.com*

The group is seeking up to three new members,

Brian Hill is keen to restart the **Scottish Country Dancing Group**.

If you're interested and would like to know more, please contact Brian, Tel: 07879 423574, Email: arcanum27@mac.com

Ruth Friday is appealing for more members to join the **Croquet Group** which meets on **Thursday afternoons, 2 to 4pm**. Please contact Ruth for more details, Tel: 01509 852698, Email: susanfriday@gmail.com

The **Photography Group** would welcome new members of all levels of experience. If you enjoy taking photos then do give us a try. We look at each others' pictures, provide gentle guidance, both 'artistic' and technical, and view photographic exhibitions online. Meetings are on the second Tuesday of the month, 2-4 pm.

Please contact **Mary Tisserand**, Tel: 01509 852835. Email: marytisserand@yahoo.co.uk

Coach Outing Trip to Shugborough Estate



Thursday 7th September

£15pp for National Trust members, £29 for non-members

The coach leaves Sutton Bonington Playing Fields Car Park at 9.00am and returns around 5.30pm

To book places please contact Roger Golds -Tel: 01509 853000 or 07753 350138, Email: sandrgolds@gmail.com

MACMILLAN Coffee and Cake fundraiser in aid of Macmillan charity. Saturday
CANCER SUPPORT 30th September, 10am - 1pm, 3 College Road, Sutton Bonington

Contact Alison Lloyd for more details.

Tel: 01509 673782, Email: alison.lloyd1955@gmail.com

Christmas carvery dinner party. Friday 1st December, 7 - 10.30pm, Rushcliffe Golf Course, East Leake. Details to follow.

Financial Management For Retirees

Our speakers at the general meeting on 25th July were Paul Waites (right) and David Ryley (left) from Ryley Wealth Management, part of the St James's Place group. Their informative presentation comprehensively covered several topics: wills, lasting powers of attorney, long term care and inheritance tax - and various ways of setting up trusts and other schemes to help minimise tax liabilities.

This can be something of a minefield judging by the many questions from the audience as each of us mulled over thoughts about whether we're making the best provision for ourselves and our families. *The company provides expert advice on such matters and can be contacted for a personal consultation. Email: enquiries.ryleywm@sjpp.co.uk, Tel: 0115 7043640, Web: www.ryleywm.co.uk*



In Case of Emergency

When we're out and about there's always a risk that we might suffer an unfortunate mishap, such as an accident or perhaps a medical emergency, especially as we get older. So it's useful if people with you know whom to contact.

Group leaders often keep a list of such details, but they may not always be around. Keeping this information on your person at all times is the safest bet.

Here's a simple template to fill in, cut out and keep in your purse, wallet, mobile phone case or some other place easily found.

My name:

Medications to be aware of:

In case of emergency please contact..

Name:

Tel:

Name:

Tel:



The sun shone for our
Coronation BBQ Party

in May. Eighty of us packed into Normanton on Soar village hall and were entertained by our Soar Valley Singers, the Barrow Ukelele band and our keyboard accompanist, Wendy Miller, who gave us a saxophone solo. Our thanks to the Social Events Team, Alison Lloyd and Ruth Grantham, for an enjoyable afternoon.



David Howdle tells us a little about

The Hill Walking Group

We meet on the last Thursday in the month to walk, usually in the Peak District. Walks are usually circular but we have been known to catch a train for a linear walk on more than one occasion.

Walks, which are usually just over ten miles with some hills, are planned from a map and not pre-walked so some changes are to be expected on the day, due to either foot-paths being impassable or the weather and could be longer or shorter than planned.



Catching a train at Hathersage for a linear walk back to Hathersage



At Carsington Water

We are never 'lost' but on occasion 'positionally displaced'. If BBC Weather has the probability of in excess of 50% rain all day we call the walk off: there's not much fun in being wet all day. However, we have been known to set out in glorious sunshine only for snow to fall by lunch! The weather can be unpredictable in the Peak.

We take a packed lunch as there are not many pubs or cafes where we walk and, in any case, we cannot spare the time as we normally start at 09:30 hrs and finish late afternoon. We do, however, at Christmas, have a shorter walk in the morning and have lunch at a pub.

David Howdle

Music Concert in Kingston-on-Soar Church



The Kingston-on-Soar string quartet are back with an evening of light music on **Saturday 12th August** starting at 7.30pm. There will be a short Haydn quartet plus excerpts from Schubert, Vaughan Williams, Gilbert & Sullivan and popular music.

This is the sixth annual chamber music concert to take place in the ornate interior of Kingston-on-Soar parish church, which provides a good atmosphere for an evening of light music.

Come and join us for a fun evening with a glass of fizz and nibbles, a perfect way to relax on a lovely summer evening. The church is easy to reach and there is plenty of free parking available.

Tickets are £10 for adults, £5 for students and children, pay at the door. The proceeds will be divided equally between the church and the DEC Ukraine Appeal.

Graham Crocock

A Guiding Hand

You may have seen member **Jackie Benskin** turn up at u3a activities with a rather gorgeous, and extremely well behaved, Labrador by her side. But this isn't a pet. It's a future guide dog for the blind in its first stage of training. In fact, Jackie's current charge, Opal, is her fifth and she's been training dogs ever since her husband died around ten years ago. What got her into it? Well, she'd always been a dog lover and she just picked up the phone on the spur of the moment one day to enquire about guide dog training.

She nearly didn't pass Guide Dogs UK's strict vetting procedure to become a 'Puppy Raiser' as she's known. Living in Sutton Bonington was considered too rural: the hustle and bustle of city life is the preferred environment because there's more stimulation to deal with. But Jackie's persuasive passion was convincing.

Jackie receives her specially bred puppies at eight weeks. Hers have always been Labradors because they're considered to be intelligent, have a calm temperament and are willing to learn; but other breeds are also sometimes used. Her work is entirely voluntary, though she doesn't have to pay for food and vet fees.



Jackie's previous dog Pam becomes a 'Buddy Dog'

Jackie will keep a dog for around a year and her job is to get it house trained and to

'socialise' it. She brings it along to the Singing Group for example where you'll see Opal quietly nestling at her feet. And she'll take it to shops, railway stations, busy streets;

anywhere in fact where Opal can get used to being with people, other animals and noise. Once a month the two of them go off to 'puppy school' where there's training in more advanced manoeuvres.

Of course, the dogs eventually have to leave Jackie and move onto the final stage of training by specialists. They'll work with them for 16 weeks, plus a further period with the eventual owner.

A fond attachment is built up over the twelve months whilst the dogs have been in Jackie's care, so it's not an easy time for her. But occasionally she gets to meet up with a new owner. A warm smile appears on her face when she reflects on seeing how her dogs have literally changed lives.

Not all the puppies make the grade to become guide dogs unfortunately. Covid lockdown made it impossible to social train. And Jackie tells the story of her previous dog, Pam, who seemed to be doing well but on assessment was spooked by the sound of walking over a street grating. 'It had never happened before' said a deflated Jackie. But all was not lost. Pam became a 'buddy dog' for a family with a partially sighted child and who also had just had a baby with a similar disability. Another satisfied smile from Jackie. It had all been worthwhile after all.



Jackie with Opal

Brian Hinnars

Our Membership

Membership Secretary **Marilyn Wood**, tells us about some aspects of her role and provides a few facts and figures.

Shortly after I took over the role of Membership Secretary from Lorna Orton we were hit by the pandemic – so with no meetings and no face to face contact with each other, things changed dramatically, as you all know.

The first problem was how to distribute the annual membership cards. Postage costs would have been exorbitant, and of course eventually passed on to members, so with a friend I delivered most of them by hand – an interesting project during which we got to know the surrounding villages quite well! Little did we know that we would be repeating the exercise the following year, 2021.

This was far too time consuming to continue in normal times, so I started to wonder if annual membership cards were really necessary. The committee discussed this and decided to have a trial run. No cards have been issued for the past two years, except to new members, and only two current members have requested new cards, which of course I was happy to provide.

Our membership at present is 335. It is interesting that although members come and go for various reasons, for the past 8 years the number has stayed around that figure.

We still have nine founder members who joined us back at the start in 1999. But we have some 'new blood' too. Nearly a third of our current numbers joined us in the past five years. This has brought more members into the 'Digital Age'. 93% now have an email address and over two thirds paid their subscription this year by bank transfer, rather than by cheque (which we very much appreciate).

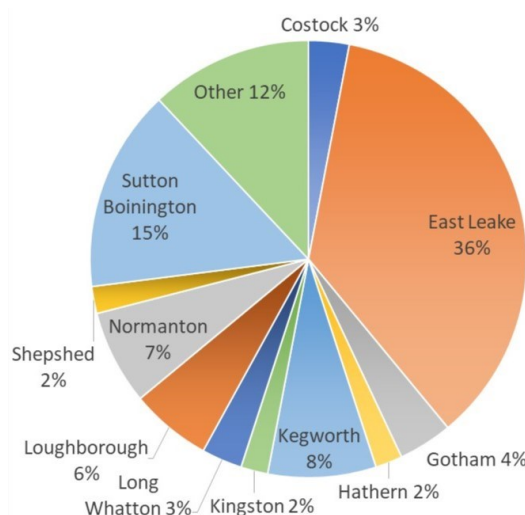
There are 69 couples and 196 individual members in total. Women outnumber men by around 2:1. We ask each new member how they came to hear of us. The majority say that they got to know about us by word of mouth.

It has been a pleasure to be able to get to know many of you so well. My personal opinion is that in a smaller organisation such as ours, this is much easier than in larger u3as.

Before I sign off I have to mention payment and collection of subs, which is quite a task and can take 2–3 months after the renewal date. Please can I ask you to make a note on your calendar or in your diary: *subs are always due on 1st March each year.*

Marilyn Wood.

Where do our members live?



Soar Valley u3a Members Facebook Group

Have you joined this new Facebook group yet? (set up a few months ago by Paul Fileman). More and more u3a members have, and they're posting photos and comments about what their activity groups have been doing. Take a look yourself. And maybe you'd like to show others what your group has been up to as well. It's a great way to keep in touch!

Just use the link below to join. If you're not already using Facebook, you'll need to register first.

[Soar Valley u3a Members | Facebook](#)

2024 Diaries

Available from **Joe Hemstock** from September. £3.80
Tel: 01509 558761

Email:
joe.hemstock@gmail.com

Contacts

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[Click here](#)

If you no longer wish to receive this Newsletter or email communications from us, please contact the Membership Secretary.

At Our Next General Meeting

2pm, **Tuesday 26th September** at Normanton on Soar Village Hall

Our guest speaker will be..

Amanda Harris

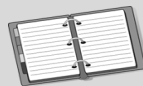


Amanda Harris has been visually impaired since birth. During her childhood, there was an emphasis on what she couldn't do, and at the age of seventeen she was receiving benefits and classed as 'unemployable'. However, having gained her Law Degree, she rose to become Departmental Head of HR for her local council, before taking voluntary redundancy to set up her own Will Writing business in 2011. Amanda is married to Martyn, who is totally blind, and they have a teenage son.

Amanda's book 'She Will Never..' is a funny, honest and moving story of a life with visual impairment, and a family with differing abilities.

A Deserved Recognition

Many of our members are volunteers. One such is **Sally Dicker**. When she retired from working at Loughborough Hospital ten years ago she began volunteer work on the reception desk at the Podiatry department where she has been ever since. And in recognition, she was recently awarded a certificate for her ten years service. Well done Sally!



Diary Dates Reminder

Shugborough visit - 7th September

General meeting - 26th September

Macmillan coffee and cake morning - 30th September

Christmas carvery - 1st December

Subscription renewal - 1st March 2024

Passing Friend

We're sad to announce the death of founder member June Knowles in May.