

Wessington U3A booklet

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Welcome

Welcome to Wessington U3A. This booklet aims to provide some information that will help you to get the most from being a member of this organisation.

U3As are self-help, self-managed lifelong learning co-operatives for people who are no longer in full time employment. They are run by the members for the members, and provide opportunities for:

- sharing learning experiences in a wide range of interest groups
- the pursuit of learning for fun rather than qualifications
- social interaction.

The U3A ethos has been summed up in the words ‘teach me something today and I’ll teach you something tomorrow’ and is also reflected in its strap-line ‘Learn, Laugh, Live’.

Wessington is one of over 1000 U3As across the UK, each affiliated to the Third Age Trust, our national representative body. Most U3As are also part of a regional grouping, and we are part of the Northumbria region. The regional organisation meets quarterly and the national organisation annually.

Please explore the following websites, where you can find lots more information:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/wessington> (or just “Google” Wessington U3A)

This is Wessington’s own website. This will give you details of all the interest groups, where and when they meet, who to contact, and lots more.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria>

This is the site of the Northumbria region, with information about regional activities and links to all the U3As in the region.

<http://www.u3a.org.uk/>

This is the site of the national U3A, where you will find all sorts of information. You will need to register (only takes a minute) in order to access the 'Members' Area'.

Your membership fee

We have asked you to pay two fees: the annual membership fee and a fee for North Biddick Social Club.

Annual membership fee

You have paid an annual fee of £16 (less if you have joined after September). Our year runs from 1st April to 31st March, and we hold our AGM in April. Your £16 covers a number of expenses that we have to meet during each year. These include:

- national affiliation fee, currently £3.50 for each member
- regional affiliation fee based on our total membership
- donations to speakers. It is contrary to the ethos of the U3A to 'buy in' any kind of tuition. Speakers at monthly meetings may be U3A members, who give their services free, or, if they are from outside the U3A, they may ask for a donation to the organisation they represent.
- funding the attendance of one or two members at the national AGM
- administrative fees to cover stationery, printing etc.
- the purchase of equipment.

Of course, this list is not exhaustive!

Fee for North Biddick Social Club

You have also been asked to pay an initial fee of £3 (£2 in subsequent years) to enable your membership of the Club where we meet monthly. The Club generously allows us to meet on its premises once a month at no charge, but it is a requirement that we are all members of the Club. Your membership also, of course, entitles you to use the Club at any other time.

Monthly meetings

Monthly meetings start at 1pm on the third Monday of each month, but you are welcome to come to the club from 11.30 onwards. At each meeting the following activities occur, not necessarily in this order!

1. Signing in

As you come into the concert room (at the back of the building) you should 'sign in' by ticking off your name on the sheets kept by the Membership Secretary. This is important; it is part of the fire safety regulations of the Club, and Wessington needs the information too.

Please also be aware that some members have restricted mobility and it is reasonable that they should occupy seats at the front tables. You may want to move chairs around but please be careful not to block access between the tables.

2. Business

The business part of the meeting, conducted by the Chair, includes any important general announcements and contributions from Coordinators of the interest groups, including details of forthcoming meetings or outings.

3. Socialising and coffee

You have the opportunity to look at the information laid out around the room by the Group Coordinators to find out about what is happening where and when. There will usually be sign-up sheets for activities. Don't forget the importance of talking to other people as a means of finding out about Wessington U3A. Use the opportunity in this part of the meeting to talk to members of the Committee and Group Coordinators about our U3A.

Coffee is provided by Joe, who runs the restaurant at the Club, for a small charge, currently £2. This is part of Joe's business and has no connection with the Club or U3A. Alternatively, you can buy a drink from the bar at the front of the building.

4. Speaker

The Chair or Speaker Secretary will call the meeting to order and introduce the speaker. The presentation from the speaker will usually last about 45 minutes, followed by questions from the floor and a vote of thanks from one of our members.

5. Meeting closes

When the meeting closes all tables and chairs have to be moved back to their original position and the room left in a clean and tidy state. Your help in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Groups

Although a high proportion of our members attend the Monthly Meetings, most members get most from their membership by joining one or more groups. Please look at the group information on our website or on tables at the monthly meetings, and then contact the specific Group Co-ordinator to find out about joining a group.

The Committee

Wessington U3A is guided by a Committee consisting of four officers and up to seven elected Committee members (some with specific jobs):

Four Officers

- Chair
- Vice-chair
- Business secretary
- Treasurer

Committee Members with Specific Jobs

- Membership secretary
- Minutes secretary
- Website editor
- Groups Co-ordinator
- Speakers Co-ordinator

The Committee is elected at the AGM in April and each member may only serve for a maximum of three years, except for the Chair and Vice-Chair, where the maximum is two years.

The Committee meets (usually) monthly and you are free to attend any Committee meeting as an observer. Remember that Wessington is run by the members for the members, so you should not

hesitate to volunteer for Committee membership. See our website for more information about the Committee and how our U3A is run.

Members of the Committee are automatically also trustees of Wessington U3A. Information about what this means is provided by the National U3A. Normally, this does not involve any extra work but it means that Committee Members are obliged to uphold the Wessington Constitution and to be aware of the Objects and Principles of the U3A organisation. There are other obligations, but training of new Committee Members will be arranged by the Committee, as appropriate. If you are considering seeking election to the Committee and would like to discuss this further then please contact the Chair or another Committee member. A copy of the Wessington Constitution can be accessed from the 'Committee' page of the Wessington website

What is not in this booklet

There is much more information available about what goes on in Wessington U3A. We have a large number of interest groups covering a wide range of subjects. They are not listed here because contact details and timings change frequently. The best ways to learn about what is going on in these groups are to:

- look at the Wessington website under the 'groups' link
- take notes during the 'business' part of the monthly meeting
- seek out a Group Coordinator during the monthly meeting.

There are also regional activities that may interest you. Announcements are sometimes made about these at the monthly meetings but the main way of letting you know about them is by email: one Wessington member acts as a regional contact, receives notices about regional events and forwards these to you by email.

And finally...

You have joined an exciting, dynamic and worthwhile organisation. We hope that you enjoy your membership and take a full part in our activities.