



Around and About

December 2022

Newsletter of the Witham and District (Essex) U3A



*Merry Christmas and Warm New Year
to all our members and their families*



Trips and outings are coming back

TRIPS and Outings are returning for our u3a but with a difference.

They will not be centred on London and the big shows.

Instead, activities will be offered in Essex or just beyond.

And they will range from shows to theatre productions. Murder mystery evenings to days at the seaside. Blue badge guided tours to historic interest.

Locations being considered may involve cars being used, trains taken or, on rare occasions, coaches hired.

ATrips and OutingsTeam is already seeing what is available from February onwards with the first opportunities to take part offered at our January Monthly Meeting.

But the offers will have to pay their way.



Members can expect to be paying in advance and being relied on to stand by what they have booked.

Early basic details of the type of activity being looked at by the Team is featured on page 3. More info at the January monthly meeting.



Privilege to serve you as your chair



Alan
Stevens
chairman's
update



Hello Everyone.

This is my last Chat as Chairman of our Witham u3a.

We ended our 2022 year at our December monthly meeting with what has become our customary Christmas Quiz.

Our thanks to Ray Hardisty for the preparations for a fun afternoon,

We also welcome Ray as our new Chairman from January 2023 onwards.

I am sure that we can look forward to his continued efforts to revive our u3a to it's previous healthier status.

So it is farewell from me as Chairman for 2022.

It has been a privilege to serve you in that post and I look forward to carrying on as Vice Chairman in the coming years.

I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Good New Year.

Thanks for steering us through a difficult year

ALAN must be thanked for seeing us safely through what turned out to be a very difficult year.

When he agreed to serve in the role, there was no expectation that we would be leaving our established monthly meeting venue.

Or that he would be faced with making arrangements for storing u3a items kept at the old venue.

Members had left him without a Vice Chair to assist in either finding the new meeting venue or the storage problems.

And, on top of that, me, as his publicity right hand man, was unwell and confined to home and light duties.

Yet he achieved everything and stands down with us established at the Witham Football Club and storage solved.

Ray Hardisty

Looking forward with enthusiasm

I MET one of our members waiting for a bus in Newland Street and we chatted.

"Is it true that you have been elected our new chairman," she asked.

"Yes", I said.

"We are sure to see some differences now," she commented. "You don't seem to leave anything as it is. You're what I call an improver."

I smiled and said: "Maybe, but time will tell the story."

And as that story of my time in office comes ever nearer in January, I am certain that it will not be a story I shall telling on my own.

Our u3a has no employees. Each and every one of us, including the Chair, is a volunteer doing what they do on behalf of others for no financial reward.



So, I believe, every member has their part to play in keeping our u3a running efficiently and well for each other.

There should be no expectation that things will to be arranged or done for you. All for one and one for all is my mantra.

Ray Hardisty

New members boost our committee

PAULINE Tyson was elected onto our committee at the AGM in November.

Following it two other members have stepped forward to assist with running our u3a.

All being well, they will be co-opted as full members at the first meeting of the year on January 6.

They will strengthen the organisation which has been eroded over the past three years.

But, under the constitution, we can still have two more co-opted members.

So, please give me a ring to discuss joining us.

Ray Hardisty



Pauline Tyson

Start of Trips and Outings

MEMBERS attending the December monthly meeting had the chance to say what types of trips and outings they would like to see offered.

Many took up the opportunity and came up with a variety of different locations.

So the new Trips and Outings team decided to launch their efforts around the type of interest shown.

They were:

- Shows and tributes
- Blue badge guided tours of regional towns.
- Tours of breweries
- Visits to steam railways
- Historic buildings
- Theatres
- Experiences from archery to motor racing
- Places of interest like lavender fields



Transport will depend on numbers and ranges from car share to coaches and mini-bus to trains.

Launch team members are Jane Barton, Pauline Tyson and Ray Hardisty being marshalled by Sheena Campbell.

More members welcome.

Initial offerings for Trips and Outings

Wed, 1st Feb 8pm - The Carpenter's Story at Cliffs Pavilion - £30

Wed, 15th Feb 7pm - The Barber of Seville at Witham Public Hall - £16.50

Sat, 3rd March 8pm - The Best in Comedy at Witham Public Hall - £18

Sat, 11th March 7:30pm - The Music of Simon and Garfunkel at Witham Public Hall - £18

Sat, 16th April 7:30pm - The Sensational 60s Experience at Chelmsford Theatre - £32

Fri, 22 April 19:30 - Murder Mystery Evening at Museum of Power, Maldon - £?

Mon, 24th April 08:24 - Suffolk Tour with Fish and Chip Lunch - Lodge Coaches - £38.50 -

Sat, 13th May 2:30pm - Made in Dagenham at Palace Theatre, Southend - £18.50

Sat, 1st July 7:30pm - ELO tribute at Witham Public Hall - £18

More details available at the January monthly meeting on Thursday, January 26



Examples of Patchwork and Quilting.

Crafty members going well

OUR craft groups are thriving. If you are looking for something creative to do in the winter months look no further.

In November, I visited the **Patchwork and Quilting Group** at the kind invitation of Marion Stebbings.

The group members are enthusiastic about their subject and are always looking at new projects, the pictures reflect this as they show varied techniques and group endeavours.

I particularly liked their Christmas themed work.

This group and the **Knit and Natter Group** provided the Christmas tree decorations for the u3a tree in the St Nicolas Christmas tree Festival at the beginning of December, supplemented with a cut out star for each of our 30+ groups.

The **Knit and Natter Group** have also provided the post box toppers outside

Witham Sorting Office and Post office. Two wonderful joint efforts from their members. (Page 7)

We are starting a new **Art Group** in January 2023.

It doesn't matter what level you are, our aim is to learn from each other.

The first meeting will be at 2pm on Monday 9th January at 9 Chipping Hill, Witham, CM8 2DE. (opposite the Railway pub)

This first meeting will be a discussion about what we want of the group and what media we want to use in the future; it will be great to have a u3a art group once again.

If you are interested in joining, please contact me on:

Jane Barton, Groups Facilitator



We shine brightly at town tree festival

THANKS to Jane Barton and Dawn Wilding, with full support of craft group members, Witham and District u3a took part in the St Nicolas Tree Festival.



Chair's AGM report 2022

STARTING my position as Chairman at the start of 2022, we faced several challenges in the coming year.

Firstly the need to bring our membership level up to near that prior to Lockdown, we have made some progress in this although our current membership is still about 100 down on the pre Covid level.

The membership subscription was also raised to a more realistic level to £12 to reflect a rise in speakers fees etc.

Our second problem came a bit later when we found that we were prohibited from using the main hall at Spring Lodge and relegated to the Barn which is half the size.

We were forced to find an alternative venue for our meetings and so we find ourselves here at the Witham Town Football Club Hall.

We have decided to continue with this hall for the coming year, all the required dates have now been booked.

There has been some restriction in the size of the equipment storage here but on the plus side the management here are very amenable in contrast to that at Spring Lodge.

The Events Team decided this year not to carry on, the factors being the difficulties with booking theatres and coaches, the rise in these fees and the after effects of Covid on the entertainment scene.

We must apologise for the lapse in the issue of our Newsletter during the spring and summer.

Unfortunately our Publicity Officer Ray Hardisty suffered a medical condition that precluded him from working on computers and also from driving, this also meant that the Groups that he leads had to be suspended together with some Publicity events.



Our new monthly meeting base Witham Town Football Club.

Happy to say that he is back in action with us again and we hope his health continues to improve.

I would like to thank all our members for their continued support for our Witham and District u3a during all the changes through the year.

Without your interest and turning up for the Group and General meetings we would not exist.

Particularly we must be grateful for our Group Leaders as without our groups, what have we to offer? just a speaker at monthly meetings, so thank you very much everyone and look forward to seeing you all again next year.

Lastly I must express my gratitude to the members of our Committee who have pushed through our business and given me their support this past year.

It has always been a pleasure to Chair our meetings, always in a good humoured atmosphere.

I must tell you that we have vacancies for three more ordinary committee members.

We would welcome any member wishing to come forward to join us in what are quite fulfilling and important posts.

Thank you all.

Alan Stevens
Chair, 2022

Celebrate our 25th anniversary

WE launch our silver anniversary year on Thursday, January 26, at the monthly meeting.

Instead of the single speaker there will be several as we look ahead to a year with a difference.

Just one of the presentations will be on 25 reasons why we all find the u3a so enjoyable. Be there!

Update on website issues

HELLO everyone, you will be aware of the problems recently with our website.

Sadly, this affected all u3a websites using the "u3a Site Builder" system.

Our website is now back for use as before but unfortunately we have no access to photographs and text previously uploaded to your group pages.

It seems that these can only be restored if you have the original picture/text files to upload.

I have restored the Homepage "Autumn" collage and the "Constitution" text to their positions prior to the breakdown.

Before taking any restoring, you should be aware that the "u3a Site Builder" will be replaced by the "Wordpress" system in the coming year.

I do not know how the new system will affect our current website but it might be sensible to leave any restore action till after the "Wordpress" launch.

However, there is no clear idea yet, when that will be.



Please welcome Sheena Campbell to the management of our website, she will be working with me with the view to becoming the website administrator after the new system introduction.

She has IT Management background which is ideal.

I'm looking forward to handing over after five years as website manager.

Alan Stevens

Publicity needs an assistance boost

PUBLICITY and outreach for our u3a is handled through a team of members.

They have been and still are under the general care and direction of me.

So I am both Chair and Publicity Officer from January.

It means more of you need to get involved with spreading the message about how great u3a is and encouraging more people to sign up as members.

Those who come on board will be involved in organising attendance at events and taking part in promoting the u3a.

Everything we tackle is done as a team and involvement is respectful of all the other commitments all of us have.

But meeting non members is enjoyable and representing the u3a means you get to find out a lot more of how it works.

At the moment you know about the activities you take part in but what about the other 30 or so that others enjoy?

So, please, expand your social life by joining the team.

Please give me a ring.

Ray Hardisty

Invite non-members to our Blue Monday January 16 ramble

BEAT the after Christmas blues by taking part in a special Publicity Team walk around the Witham earthworks on the morning of Monday, January 16 completely free!

It's open to everyone as a social event. Just be at the Railway Tavern car park by 10am in sensible footwear.

We'll even provide hot drinks at the end.

Around the groups. Who are doing what, when and where?



Knit and Natter members on letter box topping day. Below: the library and Newland Street.

Topping post boxes

OUR **Knit and Natter Group** had fun decorating the letter boxes once again ...and we were let loose in the library too.

Trust us to pick the day after all the snow fall, so going in the library after doing the letter boxes was a chance to thaw out!

We all enjoyed a lunch at Valero's afterwards as a reward.

I'd like to thank all my knitters for their great efforts over the year, decorating the letter boxes for Our Queens Jubilee and many other items that have been knitted for charity and care homes.

Working together with Essex Knitters and Stitchers has worked well too.

Next venture is the King's Coronation..... bring it on!

Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Pat Matthews



Who are doing what, when and where?



Different effects of ink, paint and oil on water

Members' presentations

AT the **Photography Group's** December meeting we were treated to very useful and interesting presentations by two of our group members.

Firstly, Sue Foote gave us an introduction to Microsoft PowerPoint and how to use it to prepare slide presentations, such as those used by some of us at our themed photography meetings.

As an illustrative example, Sue used her previous presentation on the theme of 'Film and Book Titles', showing how to use the software to add titles and backgrounds to our photos, in addition to a variety of animation effects.

After our festive coffee break, Gerard Hayes gave us a comprehensive introduction to creating 'Liquid Abstract' images.

He showed several different methods of creating a wide range of abstract pictures using water and various other liquid elements.

These included dropping various colours of acrylic ink, acrylic paint or even children's paint, into the top of a glass container of water and shooting the resulting effects.

A second method is using oil on water.

This technique uses a colourful background and a variety of lighting sources to 'backlight' a glass dish, and then shooting downwards through the oil/water to capture a variety of interesting and colourful effects.

Lastly, a method using milk in a small container (to provide a white background), with an added film of oil and a few drops of washing up liquid. Various colour paints can then be added to create the abstract effects.

Many thanks to both Sue and Gerard for their encouragement and inspiration to 'have a go'!

Ian Weatherley

Creative Writing

IF you tried writing for yourself in the past then why not consider joining our group?

We see each session as a learning opportunity and I think we all agree that our writing has improved over the years that we have been meeting.

Please contact myself or Miall James if you would like to try out our group. Anne Charles



Oil on water left while above it's milk, oil and washing up liquid.

Who are doing what, when and where?

Strolling in and around Boreham

STROLLERS last walk of the year was in Boreham, where a good turnout of 15 members met at St Andrew's church.

Our circular route walk took us along the river, crossing the water meadows to arrive at the footbridge over the River Chelmer then on to the Mill House.

Following the track up-hill we passed Boreham Hall then back towards the village.

It was a muddy walk due to the deluges we had in November, but it didn't rain which was a bonus.

On our return we drove to the White Hart in Witham for a pre-Christmas lunch and discussions about next year's walks.

Sue Booth and Liz Tymms



Strollers at Boreham.

Sampling delights of Black Notley

WALKIE Talkies enjoyed a walk around the village of Black Notley, featuring some good paths and hard surfaces that weren't affected by the wet weather.

We met at the village recreation ground and set off towards the pretty parish church of St Peter and St Paul where John Ray the naturalist is buried.

Then along Snakey Lane, through farm buildings and along field edges before reaching a bye way that meets the John Ray walk which continues to Witham.

We took the path towards the village skirting the housing before the church came into view.

As we made our way through the churchyard it started to drizzle, thankfully we were almost back.

On our return we drove to the nearby Crossing Temple Barns for a well-deserved lunch.

Sue Booth and Liz Tymms



Walkie Talkies at Black Notley.

Meeting on the future

READING Group will meet for lunch early in the New Year, assuming the snow and ice gets cleared, and then the remaining members will meet again to discuss further progress. I am currently still in hospital but hope to be home for Christmas.

Miall James

Who are doing what, when and where?

Attendance and finance issues

HELLO History Group.

We ended this year with a talk by Julie Miller on the Quakers, covering their origins here in Essex and onto the New World in Pennsylvania.

Unfortunately we only had 11 members attend the meeting, what with that and the previous reduced attendances, it has presented us with insufficient funds to,

- Book the Henry Dixon Hall for next year.
- Book speakers for meetings for next year.

There is a way that we can at least book the Hall for meetings, Julie Miller wanted to be paid her fee of by BAC bank transfer, as we have no Group bank account, I transferred her fee from my personal ac-

count to be repaid from the group's funds when available.

I am prepared to delay my refund to my bank so that will leave us with some cash available at this time to enable me to book the hall for the first four months next year, we can then meet in February to discuss our way forward incorporating the new leader/co-ordinator proposal, and to establish our group membership for 2023.

This will give us a chance to continue with our group activities but the attendance level at meetings will always be crucial to the groups existence in the way we have been used to, your feedback on this situation will be welcome.

Alan Stevens

Bowlers set for January

CARPET BOWLS is not taking a break.

The next session is in The United Reformed Church at 10am on Thursday, January 19.

See you there!

Ray Hardisty

How to ensure you get your Members' Directory unfolded



THIS is a reminder to send a stamped and addressed C5 envelope when renewing your membership if you want to stop the 2023 Members Directory being folded.

Your renewal form says that such an envelope is needed.

In past years many envelopes sent were too small and the booklet had to be folded and squeezed.

The directory of groups and activities also includes the full programme of monthly meeting speakers

It is A5 size ... half an A4 sheet.

So normal letter envelopes are far too small.

The correct size is readily available at stationery counters.

Or, of course, you can forget about a stamped and addressed envelope altogether and collect your new year's membership card at the January monthly meeting.

And read the renewal instructions carefully.

The details of who to send the form are included so make sure you use them

Take care!

Who are doing what, when and where?

Gardeners testing the brain

THE **Gardening Group** meeting took the form of a 'Fun Quiz' and afternoon tea in November.

It had been decided that this would be a change from the normal Christmas meal, as with prices soaring in all the restaurants and people's budgets becoming squeezed this would be a satisfactory compromise.

The quiz was split into two halves, with our Afternoon Tea making a congenial break in the middle for four very important activities – namely eating, drinking, the picture quiz (20 past presenters of Gardeners World), and lively conversation!

The first two rounds of the quiz were 'General Ignorance', and 'Songs including flower or plant names'. Easier said than done as we all realised.

Afternoon tea was of course what we all knew it would be – a naughty calorific assortment of sandwiches and cakes – delicious! Not much was left for the birds.....

Round 3 was entitled 'TV, films, books and art'. Again, one thinks the answers would be easy, but not so.

As a concluding question the teams had to name all eight of Santa's reindeers.

Most got six or seven but there was always that elusive one that was at the back of the memory somewhere but wouldn't come out..... We can all identify with that!

The Fab Four were the eventual winners by just one point.



Quiz winners the Fab Four of Jane Barton, Marion Stubbings and friends.

We thanked Shirley and her team for all their hard work organising such a lovely afternoon, and Shirley and Miriam for reading the questions and doing the scoring. Pity my team was second!

We have speakers booked for the January and February meetings:

January's speaker is the actor who plays the Victorian Gardener, Bryan Thurlow, and his talk is entitled 'The Perennial Potter'.

February's speaker is Zsuzsanna Serer. She will be telling us all about growing and cooking with herbs.

We hope members will come to give an ample audience for these speakers.

Myrtle Coe

From comedy to wokery and Brexit

THERE are times when we can get a bit serious in our **Talking Shop Group** meetings so we decided that for our December meeting we should consider the question of whether swearing in comedy is necessary.

Unfortunately, due to illness some of the group could not attend and so we have carried forward this topic to the next meeting on the second Thursday in January.

Next year we also plan to consider:

Wokery – is it really a thing and if so what is it;

Brexit – a good time to review the outcome;

And the warning banners in TV and education.

So lots to think and talk about in 2023.

Do come and join us.

Anne Charles

Officers and committee members



Alan Stevens
Chairman & Webmaster



Mike Osborn
Secretary



Dawn Wilding
Treasurer



Ray Hardisty
Publicity Officer



Jane Barton
Groups' Co-ordinator



Pam Fearnley and Margaret Bignell
Membership Secretaries

The u3a is unique, exciting and joyful!

u3a

u3a

THE u3a is a unique and exciting organisation which provides, through its member U3As, life-enhancing and life-changing opportunities.

Retired and semi-retired people come together and learn together, not for qualifications but for its own reward: the sheer joy of discovery.

Individuals share their skills and life experiences: the learners teach and the teachers learn.