

MESSAGE FROM CHRIS NIVEN, CHAIR OF THE NOTTS NETWORK

Hello everyone,

I hope all is well with you all and the wet, windy and cold weather is not dampening your appetite for u3a based activities. Judging by the contents reported in Newsbites it seems the enthusiasm for events and adventures has not waned.

In this issue I want to take the opportunity to say thank you to two of our committee members. First of all to Peter Edge. Peter has been our webmaster for some considerable time and has done a fantastic job keeping everything up to date and making sure I get any correspondence sent through the website. I want to thank Peter for all his hard work over the years and wish him all the best for the future.

We have been lucky to secure the expertise of Terry Moore who is taking over from Peter. A warm welcome to Terry and thank you for taking on this important role.

Secondly, we are also bidding farewell to Jean Hogg as our treasurer. Jean stepped in at short notice and has been instrumental in sorting out our new bank account and updating our systems. A big thank you to Jean for her support and commitment. The good news is that Jean is staying on the committee to share her extensive knowledge.

I am pleased to announce our new treasurer is Paco Saucedo. Many thanks to Paco for stepping up to this crucial committee role.

Nottinghamshire Network continues to thrive. Unfortunately we know that others are not so robust and we are in the process of looking at ways we can collaborate with our colleagues and offer support. More information on this initiative in the near future.

So, lots to celebrate and enjoy.

Best wishes to everyone

Chris

FREE EVENT – SAVE THE DATE – Monday 30 JUNE 2025

NOTTS NETWORK WORKSHOP

10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. at Newstead Community Centre

**CALLING PRESENT AND POTENTIAL GROUP LEADERS, CONVENORS,
FACILITATORS, CONTACTS AND GROUPS CO-ORDINATORS**

**A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE
AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER**

WATCH THIS SPACE – MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW

DUKERIES u3a

The Lincs and Notts Air Ambulance has, for many years, been the Dukeries U3A's elected charity. Based in Lincoln, the Air Ambulance has flown over 30000 missions covering 3,500 square miles, frequently accessing rural areas where traditional road ambulances may find it difficult and time-consuming to reach.



I have personal experience of the Air Ambulance in action at Rufford Park Golf Club. My sister-in-law was taken ill during a lunchtime function, the Air Ambulance was summoned and actually landed on the 9th Green. I was very anxious that the green would be badly damaged, and that we would incur the wrath of angry golfers, but I needn't have worried. Such was the crew's professionalism and skill, not a mark was left on the putting green when the ambulance, with my sister-in-law on board, took off towards Lincoln Hospital and golf was able to continue straightaway!

The Dukeries U3A is proud to announce that it has now raised the magnificent sum of £8000 on behalf of the Air Ambulance, largely thanks to the sheer dedication and fundraising acumen of one of our members, Pam Hardwick, who really has taken the cause to her heart.

Despite the very variable weather of late, our Ramblers and Walkers have cheerfully donned their walking boots and 'big coats' to explore the local countryside in Winter. The Ramblers did an eight mile round trip from the Limes Café into Sherwood Pines, returning via the old railway line.



Our 'Group of the Month', the WhatsApp Walkers (here pictured enjoying their Christmas Lunch in Rumbles café at Vicar Water) meet every fortnight on a Thursday at 10.30 a.m. Their aims are simply to enjoy gentle, undemanding walks of some three to four miles in length in good company where the conversation flows! If you might be interested in joining them, then please contact the Group Leaders, Hazel or John Frances, on 07484 728027. You will be made most welcome.

Mike Mounsey

SOUTHWELL u3a

SHORT COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

Here's a possible New Year's idea for u3as and their management committees around the county.

On a trip to see our children in Australia 3-4 years ago, I called in at the Canberra u3a to see how the u3a operated down under. Amazingly, Canberra u3a has over 4000 members and 2 staffed offices! What intrigued me though was that most of their activities appeared to consist of short courses and workshops, rather than regular interest groups meetings.

At that time, I was Chair of Southwell u3a and so I put forward the idea of a programme of short courses and workshops, to be led by members and to run alongside our usual interest group meetings. Like many u3as, we had previously run occasional workshop sessions on a variety of subjects, but we had never had a full programme of courses and workshops before.



We asked members for ideas for subjects and for offers to run courses and workshops on any topics that might be of general interest. As might be expected, we received many more ideas than actual offers to run courses! However, we were able to put a programme together for the year, ranging from an introduction to tablets and smartphones, church architecture, energy saving tips and plumbing for amateurs to an introduction to photography, preparing and hand-spinning wool and learning to play the violin. This was supplemented by formal workshops from outside

speakers and agencies on such topics as basic first aid and staying safe online.

The programme was sent out to members at the beginning of the year and they were asked to contact the course and workshop leaders directly by email to express an interest in whichever sessions took their fancy. The leaders booked venues but all hire costs and associated expenses were covered by Southwell u3a, so that there were no charges to members for attending the sessions.

All went surprisingly well! We have recently put together our third annual programme of short courses and workshops for the coming year and (with a bit of begging and persuasion!) haven't yet run out of new offers and ideas, including a forthcoming guided tour called "What did the Romans ever do for Southwell?"

If anyone would like any further information regarding how we have put together and run the programmes, please contact me at drbrianplatts@hotmail.com.

Brian Platts

HUCKNALL & DISTRICT u3a

Hardwick Hall via Lady Spencer's Wood, walk of 8.92 miles

Date: 9th January 2025



The walk commenced from Teversal Visitors Centre under a crisp winter sky, with temperatures hovering around 5°C. The path to Hardwick Hall wound gently uphill, offering panoramic views of the frosty countryside. The trail, well-marked and lined

with bare hedgerows, provided a tranquil atmosphere, punctuated by the occasional call of a robin or the rustle of dry leaves.



After approximately 45 minutes of steady walking, Hardwick Hall came into view, its Elizabethan grandeur standing stark against the pale sky. The grounds, partially dusted with frost, were quiet, allowing for peaceful exploration of the exterior. A short rest was taken here to admire the scenery and enjoy a warm flask of tea.



The return journey led through Lady Spencer's Wood, a secluded haven where towering oaks and beeches created a serene canopy. The woodland path was soft underfoot, scattered with fallen leaves. The air was invigorating, carrying the earthy scent of damp moss. Several squirrels were spotted darting between trees.

The circuit concluded back at the visitors' centre after a total of around three hours, leaving walkers refreshed and inspired by the landscape's wintry charm. This route is highly recommended for its natural beauty and historical highlights.

Mark Thornley

RAINWORTH & DISTRICT u3a

Rainworth & District u3a have again had a small increase in membership.

Over 50 members went to The Hostess Restaurant for a Christmas lunch. After lunch we were entertained by a singer and several people took to the dance floor.



A trip to Thursford for the Christmas Spectacular was a really enjoyable day out. As usual the show lived up to its very high standards, it never disappoints, and we all came away very happy.

We held our Christmas party on our usual meeting day. We were entertained by Dave Moylan showing us some magic as well as singing. Our own singing group The Ringtones sang Christmas Carols inviting us all to join in. The lunch was prepared and served by the Social committee. The Christmas raffle was very well supported and with the generous donations by members three hampers were prepared; other prizes included luggage, wine, chocolates, vouchers and plants.



Our u3a again displayed a Christmas tree at the church of St Simon & St Jude as part of their Christmas tree event. It was beautifully decorated in u3a colours. This is always an opportunity to advertise local groups, businesses and schools.

Prior to Christmas the groups were busy with activities: the Garden group made Christmas wreaths and table decorations while the Strollers strolled around Sutton Reservoir. The indoor games were, as always, closely contested; Jackie Massey a newcomer to Maltese Cross dominoes won a game as did Ian and Diane Hibbert. Kurling was won by the Red team avenging the loss to the Blues the previous month. The knitting group continued knitting squares for blankets and some hats were being made for presents.

Two new groups have been started, the Armchair Film Club and a local luncheon group.

Jackie & Colin Massey



NEWARK & DISTRICT u3a

When our Groups Coordinator, Iain McGrath, organised a Wine Tasting event at Newark's Waitrose supermarket there was a veritable stampede of interested takers.



Come the night and forty-seven members were greeted by the Waitrose Sommelier who led us to tables laden with not only a wonderful selection of wines but also delicious cheeses, biscuits, grapes and pork pies.



Over the next two hours, during which our glasses were regularly replenished with whites, reds, "bubbles" and even a saucy little vegan rosé wine, which incidentally was thoroughly delicious yet made from, of all things, carrots, we learned not only where each wine came from, but also which foods they best complemented.

At the end of the evening, while we may have walked away in a slightly less than straight line, we all agreed that we would definitely be back for a refresher course at

some point in the future especially as poor Iain was forced to miss the evening after succumbing to a nasty bout of 'flu. After all, it would only be fair and reasonable, wouldn't you say?



Maggie George
Chairman

MANSFIELD u3a

New Groups

Mansfield u3a is very excited to announce that in March new Groups are being set up – Pilates/Chair Pilates and Watercolour Painting for Beginners.

Chinese New Year Celebration

This annual event once again captured the beauty and significance of this truly amazing event. There was a fantastic turnout at Springwater Restaurant in Calverton of Mansfield u3a members together with others from the Network. Served with excellent food and entertainment, good fun and enjoyment was evident on all the tables. Finished off with a wonderful fireworks display.

Burns Night - Refined Dining West Notts College

The very first Burns Night was held in 1801, and over 200 years later, some of the traditions of that night still exist today. Not a Tam o' Shanter, kilt or sporan in



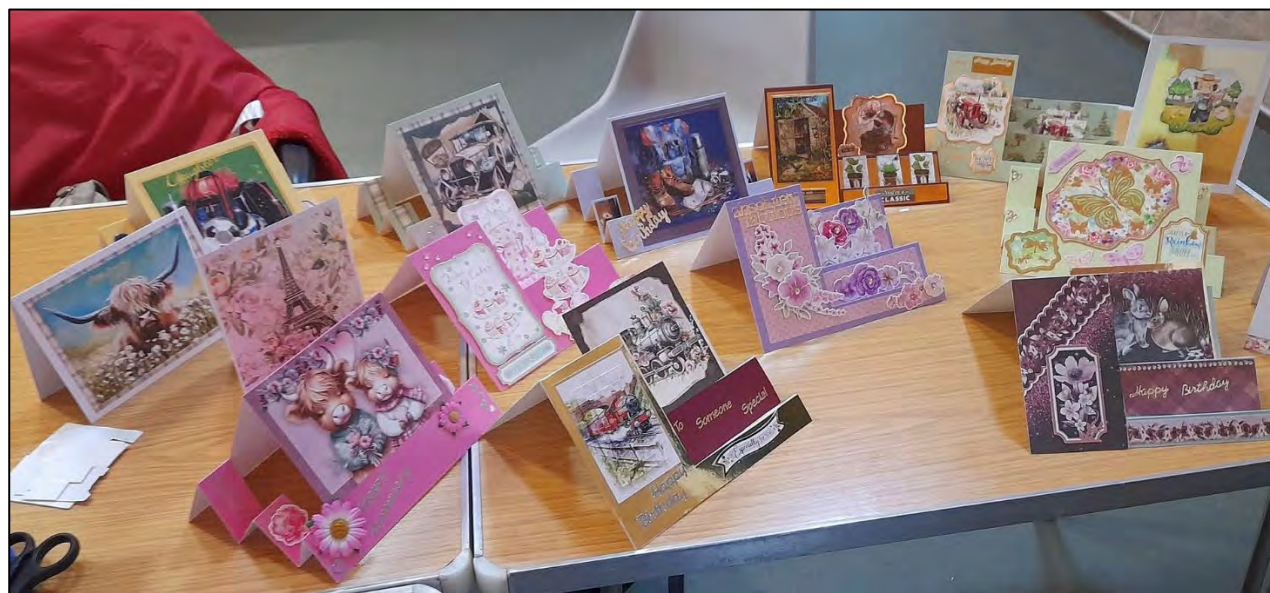
sight, but this didn't deter our 29 Highland flingers from having the most wonderful time.

So, what better excuse can you have for a friendly get together than to enjoy an amazing meal.

Big thank you to the enthusiastic staff for preparing and presenting such a gastronomic delight.



Card Crafting Group



Great Card Crafting session with eleven members who made some impressive valley cards and others.

Bill and Carole Harrison
Publicity Officers

WORKSOP u3a

Simply Swing

Worksop & District swing band Simply Swing specialises in the Big Band sound and offers professional-standard concerts.



After a busy 2024 in which the last concert saw them raise £894.50 for MND, the band members are now working towards their 2025 bookings which are as follows up to now.

Friday 4th April – Swing into Spring – Grove Street Methodist church 7–9.30 p.m. All welcome.

Thursday 8th May – Nationwide Beacon Lighting, North Anston Parish Hall 7–9 p.m. All welcome.

Saturday 21st June – National Make Music Day, Grove Street Methodist Church – lunchtime. All welcome.

Friday 26th September – Macmillan Coffee Morning, Christ Church, Worksop 10–12.30 p.m. All welcome.

Friday 7th November – Whitwell 40s Night, Whitwell Community Hall, 7.30–10.30 p.m. All welcome (tickets).

We are also working on 2 more concerts – one either May or July at Dinnington Resource Centre to raise money for Prostate Cancer and one in November/December (charity yet to be decided).

Our thanks to the many U3A members who support us at these events – it is lovely to see you all

Sheila Massey

EASTWOOD & DISTRICT u3a

In our January monthly meeting we were entertained by Danny Wells and the subject matter was pubs! It was unfortunate that due to the inclement weather the turnout was not as high as usual. That didn't stop us from enjoying a very interesting subject on not only pubs and their history and how they came about to be named, but also all the very unusual places where you find pubs. Converted urinals in Liverpool is one which stands out!

We learnt all about the drinking habits throughout the ages and gin sodden London in the 19th century was not a place you really wanted to be in. The Jury is still out as to whether Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem in Nottingham is one of several pubs claiming to be the oldest in England. Others that claim to be the oldest include Ye Olde Salutation Inn and The Bell Inn, also in Nottingham.

Our speaker in February was Andy Smart, who gave a talk on Nottingham's Theatre History. It was very entertaining, and I would like to have been a fly on the wall to listen to all the gossip, caustic first night reviews and people watching all the famous stars to grace the boards and in the audience. These included stars such as Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, Judie Dench, Diana Rigg. Ken Dodd was the most prolific entertainer and there were queues round the block to buy tickets for his long-running annual shows.

We even had audience participation with a sing along to one of the old music hall songs, "my old man said follow the van..." We had the history of how all the theatres evolved, how they were built, then demolished and even a near riot with the council offices when they threatened to knock down one of the Theatres! They lost, and the Theatre remains to this day. People power won the day. There is even a ghost who appears every so often and has been seen near the stage. Rumour has it she was left pregnant and homeless by an actor and committed suicide. Such a rich tapestry of the history of our local theatres.

Anne Steel
Vice Chair



2D Felting Workshop

December 2024 saw 15 members of Beeston u3a spending a couple of hours learning the art of 2D felting. The workshop was led by Nicky Barlow and her aunt who run a craft shop – Craft Corner Gifts – based in the courtyard at Thoresby Park, near Newark. Nicky runs a number of craft workshops and this was her first outing to present a workshop to an external group in their own venue.



The craft involves teasing out strands of dyed cashmere wool and laying them onto a background using VERY sharp needles. Once the background is completed, further steps are taken with strands of wool used to create a work of art. Some of our efforts both during the process and on completion can be seen in our photos.

Nicky can be seen showing us the technique to use. We were so engrossed in our artistic efforts that our workshop overran by 30 minutes but nothing was too much for our trainers. Our finished works of art were then encased in frames for us to take home.

Dee May



CARLTON & GEDLING u3a

Opera Group

Carlton and Gedling u3a has an opera group which meets on line to discuss operas we have watched on free streaming platforms. It's like a reading group for opera! It's free to join to any member of a Notts u3a.

This month, we watched two productions of Janacek's *The Adventures of Mr Broucek*. They could not have been more different and more innovative. One production used a lot of newsreel video to link Broucek's voyages to the Moon, and to Prague in the time of the Hussite rebellion, to events in 1968. Grange Park Opera was more adventurous still, recasting the libretto into English and turning the Moon visit into a surreal contemporary romp.

Both productions had their advocates and critics, but we all agreed that it was good to watch productions of such a rarely performed opera.

In February, we are returning to the mainstream big time with Verdi's *La Traviata*. We shall look at a production from Philadelphia Opera starring Lisette Oropesa. Like to join us without paying an affiliation fee? Go to our Carlton and Gedling u3a website.

Paul Martinez

STAPLEFORD & DISTRICT u3a

A hilarious account of the life of an "accidental extra" amused us all at Stapleford u3a on February 5th. Mike Newbold, about to retire from the corporate world, met his costume designer daughter for lunch on set, and quickly found himself "helping out" that day as an "SA" (supporting artist) and for two further days, and receiving an unexpected fee for what he felt had been a great day out.

Retirement offered a chance to explore this intriguing new world.

Mike recounted his unconventional acquisition of the all-important Equity card, and good luck in discovering an excellent local agent. There were wonderful stories of minor triumphs and embarrassments on sets of series such as "The Doctors", "Jane Eyre", and "Morse". But among his favourite appearances were many episodes of "Last of the Summer Wine"; among them a speaking (better paid) part - ("Morning, Howard") - as a tiptoeing Howard tried to elude Pearl, another as the silent helmet-clad cyclist emulated by Howard in another scheme to achieve anonymity.

He revelled in encounters with so many well-known actors, most of them generous and encouraging. Among them was Brian Murphy - affectionately remembered as

George in "George and Mildred", but for Mike as Alvin in "Last of the Summer Wine", a kindly, unassuming man, who had died only a day or so earlier.



Mike Newbold, "Supporting Actor" and excellent entertainer.

He was surprised by the superb catering arrangements; found how briefly a speaking part elevates an extra, just occasionally, way above a mere SA; and acknowledged just how many, after years of study at drama school, struggle financially as they aspire to join the ranks of the stars.

Marion Edwards
Business Secretary

RAVENSHEAD u3a

2025 got off to a good start with a valuable presentation at our Monthly Meeting given by Anne-Marie Watkinson from Citizens Advice. She spoke about the dangers of carbon monoxide as well as benefits from pension credits to blue badges. She is currently working in cooperation with the Cadent Gas Network, so was able to hand out carbon monoxide detectors and offer encouragement and help to sign up to the Priority Services Register.

Our many interest group meetings are back in full swing, and we now have two Food & Cookery Groups.

In January, Group 1 met at the home of Maria Gabrielczyk, a last-minute change of venue due to a boiler failure!

The theme was "All Day Breakfast" a new and very successful idea which led to a wide range of dishes including vegetarian curry with chapatis, fruit salad with Greek yoghurt, waffles with crispy bacon and maple syrup, Polish breakfast platter and breakfast quiches! Other highlights included a delicious kedgeree, coddled eggs and black pudding on toasted bagels, hash browns and mushrooms, and cinnamon buns.

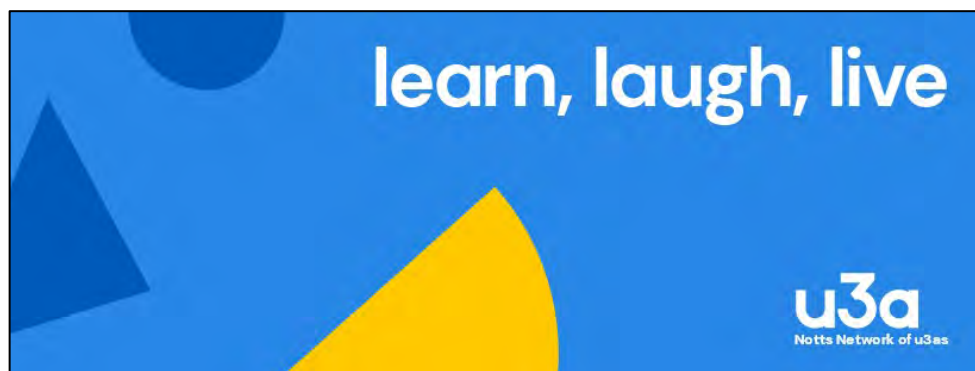
Group members were enlightened as to the history of breakfasts, throughout the centuries and were entertained to discover that substantial second breakfasts were an ancient tradition and not a figment of JRR Tolkien's imagination.

The magnificent spread and great company made for a splendid lunch which lasted until almost tea time and they are now looking forward to the next session on the theme of "Fakeaway", a home-made takeaway meal which doubtless will be cheaper and healthier than the shop bought versions.



Meanwhile, Food & Cookery Group 2 featured in the u3a Friends National Newsletter in the Media Spotlight section, after a Facebook post to Ravenshead u3a's Facebook Page was spotted by the Trust's Editorial Team, again showing photos of members enjoying food on the theme of "All Day Breakfast".

Sue Butler



GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLES TO NEWSBITES

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.newsbytes@gmail.com

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 2025 to maria.newsbytes@gmail.com