

# Connect

## West Midlands Region

Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire.

**u3a** learn,  
laugh,  
live

### May ISSUE 2021



As we approach the end of May, most u3a members will have had the opportunity of two vaccinations which should provide us with more social confidence to venture out and start meeting colleagues and friends once again. The Covid restrictions are slowly being relaxed and if you are anything like me, you will be looking to make up for lost time with friends and family.

But what sort of normal will we face in the future? Many u3a venues may still impose conditions about cleanliness or numbers attending face to face meetings, and many members will remain wary about meeting in large numbers. Perhaps some social standards will change permanently – will we resume shaking hands, hugging and kissing? Will our members be happy sharing cups, materials and equipment? These are all issues that will crop up, and local u3as will need to recognize the ongoing sensitivities of our members. Equally I hope that members will support their u3a Committees as we adjust to the new normal.

The future of online technology is another challenge to be faced. Whilst some members will doubtless be glad to see the back of Zoom, Google Meet or Teams, many others have recognized that online meetings and online learning are very effective ways of getting things done. They avoid the need to venture out in bad weather, tussle with public transport, or spend hours travelling – but they also provide a perfect opportunity for members who are unable or unwilling to venture out, and enable members to join together without geographical boundaries. In the last 15 months, attendance at many online AGMs, conferences, and tutorials has far outstripped face to face attendance, so for many, online learning sessions will become part of their new normal, and its likely that many u3a Committees will spend at least some of their time holding meetings online.

Whatever your preference, the u3a movement is a flexible organization, and I hope that we can accommodate most needs and opinions. I am always available to contact, and the u3a Office and national website are both great sources for support and advice as we stumble through the minefield of the next few months.

Allan Walmsley, Trustee for the West Midlands

### WED 2 JUNE: NATIONAL U3A DAY

Despite all the arguments, the national u3a Day is going ahead and some of the plans for outdoor activities are absolutely astonishing. And if most u3as take part, we should make a national impact. Plan activities for later in the year if you wish but try to **announce** your activities **on 2 June**.

See the u3a day webpage and Facebook group for more info and start planning now!

### EM 26-03-21 Link to u3a mailing on constitutions and Covid guidance

Copy and paste the following link

[https://mailchi.mp/u3a/em-26-03-21-u3a-constitution-and-covid-advice?e=\[UNIQID\]](https://mailchi.mp/u3a/em-26-03-21-u3a-constitution-and-covid-advice?e=[UNIQID])

### Push Back Ageism Webinars

**EM 25-05-21 u3a Join our final ageism webinar, Control and click:**

[Euroageism and u3a - seminar series on Ageism Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite](#)

**Share your u3a Day ideas** on <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/u3a-day>

Or Control+Click [HERE](#)

### Unable to book on the recent Finance Workshop?

Issues raised are available in the Financial Matters on the National Website

# Creative Writing Competition

Have you found a way to express your creativity?

The Creative Writing Competition has been running for a while and all u3a members have been invited to try their hand.



The deadline for submission is 28 May –  
so make sure you don't miss out.

Click [HERE](#) for more details

## RETAIN & RECRUIT U3A MEMBERS

A Working Party of members from 65 u3as has produced 35 tools to help with the retention and recruitment campaign.

There are papers, presentations & videos, showing how a bit of thought & lateral thinking can help u3as to stem & reverse reductions in membership and adjust an ageing profile.

The Toolkit is on the main u3a website under the **Sources** Online section.

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## FIRST REGIONAL SUBJECT WEEK

### EXPLORING WORLD FAITHS

Our first Regional Subject Week, **Exploring World Faiths**, was a roaring success.

Over 270 members joined the first online session on Christianity, and the audience averaged over 200 for each of the next four days. Subjects included Islam and Christian Science, Hinduism and Buddhism, Baha'i and Sikh, and Judaism and Scientology.

Dr Peter Rookes, National Subject Adviser for Exploring World Faiths, said he was delighted with the response. "This has certainly put World Faiths on the u3a map.

We looked at each faith objectively and from a historical viewpoint, without any prothletising, and members asked some really interesting and searching questions. Lots of members enquired about starting an interest group in their own u3a and we are looking at ways of supporting them."

**If any member is thinking about setting up an Exploring World Faiths group, Peter would love to hear from you on [pjrookes@gmail.com](mailto:pjrookes@gmail.com), mobile: 07703 336 088.**

**Celebrating, Connecting, Communicating.**

**A week of daily, interactive, online sessions**



**When**

**14-18 June 2021**

**Daily sessions, am 10-12, pm 1.30-3.30**

**Networks are vital links in the communication chain across the organisation and are greatly valued by the Trust. But do you know how they fit in and what they can and cannot do?**

**Featuring**

- The Benefits of Belonging to a Network
- Constitution, NAA, Charity status
- Diversity of networks • Websites, PR, FaceBook
- Hybrid meetings • Peer Support networks

## REGISTRATION

**EVENTBRITE LINKs will be released later**

## DATES

**14-18 JUNE 2021**

**SAVE THE DATES IN YOUR DIARY**

## FEATURING

**HILARY JONES**

**SAM MAUGER**

**LIZ THACKRAY**

**LIZ DRURY**

## WHO DOES IT BENEFIT?

**NETWORK COMMITTEES**

**NETWORK MEMBERS**

**u3a CHAIRS**

## Netfest Programme

Date & Time	Mon 14 <sup>th</sup> June	Tues 15 <sup>th</sup> June	Wed 16 <sup>th</sup> June	Thur 17 <sup>th</sup> June	Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> June
<b>Morning 10.00-12.00</b>	<b>Presenter: Hilary Jones</b>  <b>"What Networks do"</b>  <i>Co-host: Barbara Cordina</i>	<b>Presenter: Sam Mauger</b>  <b>"Constitutions, NAA, Charity Status"</b>  <i>Co-host Barbara Cordina</i>	<b>Presenter: Derek Harwood</b>  <b>"Peer Support Networks"</b>  <i>Co-host Jane Bailey</i>	<b>Presenter: Derek Harwood</b>  <b>"Slow-Ways Project"</b>  <i>Co-host Hilary Jones</i>	<b>Presenter: Margaret Fiddes</b>  <b>"PR Introduction for Networks"</b>  <i>Co-host Alan Walmsley</i>
<b>Afternoon 13.30 – 15.30</b>	<b>Presenter: Liz Thackray</b>  <b>"Alternative ways of running meetings – hybrid and other options"</b>  <i>Co-host Hilary Jones</i>	<b>Presenter: Liz Drury</b>  <b>"Network Communication Challenges"</b>  <i>Co-host Jane Bailey</i>	<b>Presenter: John Bent and Julie Travers</b>  <b>"Click and Save Scheme"</b>	<b>Presenter: Avis Furness</b>  <b>"Successful Networks"</b>  <i>Co-host Derek Harwood</i>	<b>Presenter: Alan Walmsley</b>  <b>"TGIF (Thank Goodness It's Friday)"</b>  <i>Co-host Avis Furness</i>



# GUIDED TOWN WALKS

## Discover Droitwich in 2021



**Would you like to find out more about Droitwich Spa?**

**Do you enjoy local history?**

Book by visiting Droitwich Spa Heritage and Information Centre, or call 01905 774312.

Saturday: 12 June  
Saturday: 10 July  
**Saturday: 14 August**  
Saturday: 11 September  
Saturday: 9 October  
Saturday: 13 November

Cost £3 per person (advance booking recommended). Under 16s free when accompanied by an adult – max two children per paying adult.

**Walks start at 11am from St. Richard's House and last approximately 1½**



Walks organised by:  
Droitwich Spa Heritage and Information Centre



## Online Renewals

Since the start of the COVID epidemic, many of us have had to change the way we shop and pay for goods, perhaps using internet shopping for the first time. But PayPal has been around for over 20 years providing a safe and secure way of paying for goods and services. You may have used PayPal yourself to purchase goods or send money to friends and family but did you know you can use it to streamline the payment of subscriptions for your u3a?

A quick review of the websites of 85 u3as in the West Midlands suggests the answer to that question is no, only a handful offer online renewals in a cashless and paperless process. These u3as understand that through Beacon, a link can easily be created to PayPal that enables members to check their Beacon details and automatically renew their membership by debit card, or through a PayPal account. This renewal automatically updates the membership records in Beacon, saving admin work for Membership Secretaries and Treasurers, but also providing a secure payment option for members who want to move away from writing and posting cheques.

You will hear more about this in the coming months but here are three Treasurers giving their experience of online renewals. If you want to know more contact the Regional Trustee on [allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk](mailto:allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk)

### Moseley & Kings Heath u3a

PayPal is very easy to use and members don't need a PayPal Account. It is us as a U3A that sets up the PayPal account and members pay into it through Beacon using the Debit cards. They can do it via own PayPal account, but most do not. Advice is available from National office.

I find it helps with keeping a more accurate record of fees paid. Fees can sit in the PayPal Account and I can transfer them over when it suits me and I no longer have to handle cash.

Been very useful during lockdown, 75% of our members now pay via our PayPal account. We still allow them to pay by cheque and in cash if they prefer, but this is slowly dwindling.

When a member renews I get an email from PayPal notifying me of this, and I can send it onto the Membership Sec, but they can see who has renewed via Beacon.

**Tessa Bidgood, Treasurer.**

### Worcester District u3a

Keeping the u3a going recently has been a major challenge. But technology has enabled us to carry on and stay in communication with each other, and move on from this pandemic in a positive way.

On line renewals, membership applications and banking are in fact very easy and save a great deal of time in administration. The thing that holds these together is the use of the Beacon and PayPal systems. We have seen that the future lies in using the right type of technology at the right time. Without change there is no growth and without growth everything withers.

In the coming months you have the opportunity to learn about and use systems, which can make the administration of your u3a easier. This benefits not just you, but future office holders.

We would urge you to take up the challenge, build on what we have all learnt and improve the chances of our organisation recruiting from the younger generations, who see the use of technology as the way to move on.

**Ann Kelly, Treasurer.**

### Kings Norton and District u3a

To make life easier and we started to use PayPal alongside Beacon, to take payments for new members, and we linked Beacon in with the website so that when renewals came along, we were able to encourage members to renew by confirming their Beacon details and then clicking to pay by PayPal or by debit card.

The process covers the privacy policy as well, and allows members to change their TAM and Gift Aid preferences if they wish. Once members pay, the PayPal account automatically links with Beacon to update the record and automatically sends out a membership card. We also take renewals at Monthly meetings where we use a card machine tied to PayPal. This also enables us to take payments over the telephone from members with no internet access. — Nothing could be simpler – cashless, paperless, and no stress!

**Jenny Snashall, Treasurer.**

## Would you like to know more about — Hybrid Meetings AND/OR Facebook Groups?

How can u3as set up meetings where some members are in a group, whilst other members want to take part but can't be there in person? How can a u3a ensure inclusion for those members who are unable or socially still not confident enough to attend meetings? These are known as **hybrid or alternative meeting styles** and we've set up a free session for West Midlands u3as, to look at how it can be done, what equipment is required and how much would it cost. The session is suitable for any Committee members or Interest Group leaders who set up meetings.

There is also a free session for those u3as who want to set up a **Facebook Group** but don't know how to go about it. Social media is expected to play an increasing role in the future recruitment of u3a members and this session will show beginners how to create and maintain a Facebook presence.

**Details of both sessions are below - there's no need to register for either session, just click on the Zoom link on the day and time. There will be plenty of room for everyone.**

### Friday 4 June, 10am

**Join us to find out about HYBRID MEETINGS - no need to book in advance!**

Hybrid meetings are ones where some people attend in the room, while some people join online. The main speakers or group leaders may join in either way.

Many people may be unable or reluctant to attend meetings in person so it would be handy to be able to include them in small groups or large-scale monthly meetings.

In this presentation, Liz Thackray of Flintshire u3a discusses alternative ways of meeting, so that all members can be included.

To join, click the Zoom link below.

#### **Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84717787375>, Meeting ID: 847 1778 7375

### Tuesday 8 June 10am

**Join us to find out more about social media and Facebook – no need to book in advance!**

how to develop your Facebook page and/or group: recruiting new u3a members, involving existing members.  
How to keep Facebook going by creating great content

Jean Jackson of Lichfield u3a explains why and how you can use a Facebook Page or group for your u3a. We'll talk about social media, why we focus on Facebook, and how you can interest your members. We'll look at Facebook pages and groups, and how you can create content to keep your Page or Group going.

**Thinking about attending?** For this one, you need not be a Facebook administrator or even a Facebook user, although it would help if you were. The outcome of this should be:

- you can explain the benefits of Facebook to someone else,
- you know the difference between a Page and a Group,

you know what kind of content you can use to keep your pages going – and where to get it from.

There is more information about Facebook on the Regional website, under "Online Tools." And there will be a follow-up, hands-on event for Facebook Admins.

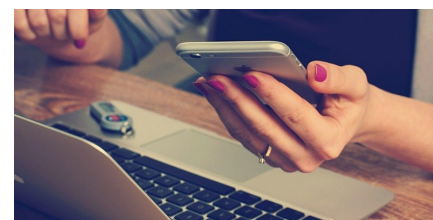
To join the event, just click the Zoom link below.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81858765395> Meeting ID: 818 5876 5395

Details are also on the W Midlands u3a Region website– no need to register!

# Keeping you safe in an electronic age

An online talk by Barry Linton of Thorpe Bay u3a.



**10am Tuesday 1st June**

As the previous events were so well received - we are pleased to announce that Barry is back with another talk on Cyber Security.

Cybercrime and related frauds have been growing at an alarming rate for several years and during the COVID pandemic it has escalated exponentially. Many of the scams originate overseas and there is little chance of identifying or arresting the perpetrators. This is international organised crime. The UK Police Strategy is to educate us on how to identify risks and to help prevent you from falling for them.

A joint seminar put together by Barry Linton of Thorpe Bay u3a and Essex Police has been presented to u3as around the county and also at the 2018 and 2019 National Conferences. This year, you are invited to join Barry as he presents this important seminar online via Zoom

Barry Linton spent his entire working life in the IT Industry. Some on Government secure networks. He is past Chair of Thorpe Bay u3a. During 2020 Barry was enlisted as a Volunteer within the Local Policing Fraud and Scams protection team

David Gibb of Essex Police provided much of the material. He presently heads the Protection Team in the Essex and Kent Serious Crime Directorate. This online seminar will discuss some of the very latest threats that are particularly aimed at the u3a generation.

Don't use a Laptop, Tablet or Smartphone? You are still at risk! Sign up to learn how to stay safe. The presentation will last for 50 minutes with time for questions and answers at the end.

This event is presented by Eventbrite and you need to register in advance.  
Its open to all u3a members. **CLICK THE LINK BELOW TO REGISTER**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/staying-safe-online-a-u3a-presentation-with-qa-tickets-153652475691>

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## Research and Shared Learning

The great thing about 'learning' in the u3a movement is that it's nothing like school! You make all the choices, for starters.

On the West Midlands website you can now find a summary of large scale Research and Shared Learning opportunities, how to get involved with them, and write-ups of recent projects that were completed over the last year.

But it doesn't stop there: you are welcome to run and enjoy your own Research and Shared Learning projects with a group of like-minded members, maybe from your network or further afield. It might be something inspired by the summaries on the website, or it might be completely different. It might involve you and a few contacts, or it might be open to as many as want to join in.  
Your project, your way.

Maybe you've already been involved in a project and you'd like it featured on the website. If so, let us know!

We're also on the lookout for members who will act as regional or network-based contacts for generally spreading the good news about u3a learning projects and encouraging involvement. Does that sound like you?

There are lots of tips to be had about how to organise a successful Research and Shared Learning project if you want them, and if you'd like any advice, support or guidance, you can contact your national coordinator,

**Maggy Simms, on [slp@u3a.org.uk](mailto:slp@u3a.org.uk)**



## AGM ELECTIONS 2021

A Message from Sam Mauger—the movement needs **YOU**

Click on the image below to hear Sam's message



A special thank you to those of you who are considering standing for election for the Trust. **Nominations must be submitted in the correct format by 31 May.** A gentle reminder that if you wish to stand, you must be nominated by your own u3a and seconded by another u3a. **Please see** [the nomination form and more information on how to apply.](#)

**If you wish to put in an application could you please provide a supporting statement of 300 words. If you wish you can also provide a film and photo.**

Thank you so much - you can also see all the details about how to apply by clicking the box below.

Click [HERE](#)  for information on the AGM Elections

To hear a little about what it's like to volunteer for the Trust board, please watch the video - ***in conversation with Margaret and Allan*** - two of our Trustees. To watch, click on the picture below: —



## LATEST COVID GUIDELINES

The latest guidance is set out on the national u3a website

**Click the link below** to see how it applies to your u3a:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/covid-19-advice-on-u3a-activities/897-covid-19-advice-on-u3a-activities-in-england-u3a-kms-doc-074>

## DATE FOR YOUR DIARY:

***The Third Age Trust AGM will held on Thursday 26 August . It will be online or a hybrid depending on Covid rules at the time.***

**Does your u3a want to propose a resolution?**

Here is your chance. Notification and Minutes available [HERE](#)

## SCAM ALERT

To read the latest advice on how to avoid being cheated by online and other fraudsters, click [HERE](#)

## Newsletter Express

To Third Age Trust Volunteers.

Read the latest copy of Newsletter Express by clicking the box below.

[Click Here](#)



## GET THE NATIONAL U3A NEWSLETTER!

Sign up [here](#)

It's a great way of finding out what's going on in u3as across the country: **you can copy all the best ideas!**

## NATIONAL NETWORK WEEK 14-18 June

Will review the role of networks in u3a: more info soon.

## MODEL

## CONSTITUTION

The **new** Model Constitution has arrived and is available on the main u3a website under **Support For u3as/ Document Downloads**. Look for Document

U3A-KMS-DOC-035.

Alternatively, log in to the main website and click

[\*\*HERE\*\*](#)

## Research and Shared Learning Coordinator

Interested in facilitating learning opportunities amongst u3a members?

Contact [slp@u3a.org.uk](mailto:slp@u3a.org.uk)

## RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT

## NOW AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD

This project was started by u3a members to support other u3as. From social media to interest groups, u3a members of the group have used their individual expertise and experiences at their own u3as to create the resources.

Marilyn Lean, Chair of Plymouth u3a, urges all u3as to have look at the toolkit: "All of the toolkit items offer very practical and manageable guidance and I have been very appreciative of them. The subjects that comprise the toolkit are key to almost every u3a."

[Click here to go to the National Office download page](#)

## NEW ON THE BRAND CENTRE

The first tranche of merchandise is available on the brand centre. This includes mugs, bags and badges. You can use these to promote your u3a and on u3a day. More merchandise over the next few months.

Click [\*\*HERE\*\*](#) to go to Brand Centre Registration Page on the National Web Site

## NEW ON THE IMAGE LIBRARY

The national image library has been updated. This is full of u3a member photos, from walking to ukulele playing. Use these on your u3a websites and publicity materials. The Trust will be updating this image library once they start doing photoshoots again.

Access the image library via the Main U3A Web Site

## CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

Volunteers keep u3a going – and we appreciate everything you do. But just in case you'd consider doing something more, there is a range of opportunities that you could consider — or perhaps recommend to a friend?

Nationally, you could attend the next Volunteer Coffee Morning to find out more. We're also seeking Trust Volunteers who might want to become expert in start-ups, facilitation, training, or join in u3a national projects.

The u3a depends on experienced members who are willing to advise, support, or just pitch in.

There's also opportunity to become part of the Region's Team. Email Allan Walmsley, Trustee, to discuss what you would like to do; we value all contributions.

We are also looking at the role and structure of the WM website, to make it more useful to groups in the Region - let us know what you think. Could you contribute?

## CALLING ALL u3a CHAIRS IN W MIDLANDS

**Every Friday, I hold a "Fireside Chat"**, a very informal Zoom session where Chairs exchange their news and views about u3a. If you're a Chair and haven't come along yet, please email me and I'll send you an invitation.

**If you want to contribute to one of our newsletters, if you'd like to know more about any of the items featured**

**OR if you just want to say hello, email [allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk](mailto:allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk)**



## STRUGGLING TO SET UP YOUR AGM ONLINE?

***Help is at hand!***

*There are tutorials on the main u3a website & we'll publish guidance on the Regional site: take a look.*

## FEEDBACK ON REGIONAL CONFERENCE

*If you have any comments about the recent W Midlands Region Conference or ideas for future conferences, let us know by clicking [HERE](#)*

## PROF. JANET LORD,



**Director of the Institute of Inflammation and Ageing, University of Birmingham** was one of our speakers at the Regional Conference.

Find her presentation & more on the Regional website: [here](#).