

Connect

West Midlands Region

Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire.

July/August 2021

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

A message from your Regional Trustee



As we move into the summer months there is an increasing optimism that u3as can now plan for the resumption of activities in the autumn. Whilst there will be a natural lack of confidence for some members, most members are reporting a willingness to meet once again face to face but it remains paramount that u3as exercise some caution and proceed carefully. Nevertheless, this is the end of the

tunnel that we've been looking for, and we all have an opportunity to build a new normal for the u3a movement.

For some this means getting back to the old normal – and that's fine. The u3a movement will always have a solid base in familiar face-to-face interest group activities. For others, there will be new interest groups, new activities, new ways of learning, and new projects – but for many u3as, recruiting new members and setting up a new Committee will be the priorities. There is an enormous amount of advice on the national and regional websites and there are advisers at the u3a Office at the end of an email or telephone call. If all else fails, you can always contact me and I'll see what I can do.

At Trust Board level, there is also an air of refreshment. The AGM in August will see the introduction of a new Chair, a new Vice Chair, and a new Treasurer. There will be new Chairs for many of the Committees and Working Parties and no doubt there will be new directions for many of the Trust activities. The Trust is always looking for u3a members to contribute to its activities so if you feel you can offer a few hours of your time, please let me know.

In the WM Region we will continue to provide activities that u3as find interesting and useful starting with a Philosophy Week 6-10 September – details are in this newsletter on page 5.

In the meantime, enjoy the holidays and let's all look forward to a renaissance of the u3a movement in the autumn.

Allan Walmsley, Trustee for the West Midlands

JOIN THE TEAM

2022 is the 40th anniversary of the u3a movement and plans are currently being prepared for celebrations and events throughout the year. The focus of the year includes a further challenge to ageism with an All Party Parliamentary Group, and launching the new vision for the movement.

A new national working party is being set up to progress ideas and communications, and they are looking for u3a members who have never been on national committees before. Are you interested? If so I can send you more details. Contact me on allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk

GUIDANCE

Constitutions and Covid

To access the 26th March 2021 link to a u3a mailing on constitutions and Covid guidance, click the blue button below

[CLICK HERE](#)

Learn, Laugh and Move with u3a.

A movement-wide initiative to stay fit, keep moving and improve our general well-being. Hundreds of u3a members are showing us how to Learn Laugh Move.

Click the yellow button below for more information.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Unable to book on a recent u3a Finance Workshop?

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

To access this click the box below

[CLICK HERE](#)

National Competition — Upcycle your wardrobe

Out with the old – turn it into the new!

Instead of throwing away those tired old clothes in your wardrobe this spring, we dare you to revamp and revitalise.

With the growing environmental concerns around fast fashion, upcycled vintage is more on-trend than ever before!

Why not have a rummage and get inspired to create something entirely new, for free. Whether that's simply adding on a design or completely repurposing the material and starting from scratch.

Just remember to get pictures before taking the scissors to something - we want to see a before picture of the garment/garments upcycled and a picture of the finished new piece. Tell us about how to have repurposed your garments so we can see the journey your creation has made. You can submit as many entries as you like!

Entries will be considered by the [Subject Advisor for Fashion](#) - selections from entries already received have been added to the national web page with more to come!

Click here for more information and examples of the work some of our u3a members have done to change the old into the new

[CLICK HERE](#)



of

A denim jacket made from old jeans by Helena Roberts From Macclesfield u3a

Review of Member Services

The u3a Office has three departments,

1. Internal Services (finance, IT, etc),
2. Communications and Policy (PR, internal and external communications),
3. Member Services (which includes advice and volunteering, together with events).

Alison May, the Head of Member Services has started a review of the ways of providing advice in the future, and she has held a number of Focus Groups with the various sections of u3a membership around the country.

One of the Focus Groups included 8 Chairs from WM u3as which provided lots of useful information for the review.

A report of the Focus Groups will be prepared in August, and I would like to join Alison in thanking those Chairs for taking part.

We all look forward to seeing how the department sees its role in the future.

Allan Walmsley

Stourbridge u3a Are Blooming

Stourbridge u3a volunteers have been active during lockdown helping to keep things bright and cheerful. The town is entering the Heart of England in Bloom competition and Stourbridge u3a have taken responsibility for planting, watering and tidying an area.



Do you have a group with unusual or interesting activities which you could share with other u3a's ?

If so please send details and photos to Allan Walmsley your Regional Trustee and where it is possible he will include them in the next Regional Newsletter. allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk

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 to

[CLICK HERE](#)

EXPLORING WORLD FAITHS

National Zoom Events — Thank you everyone who attended the WM Regional Week in April and the 2 follow-up events. In response to many requests there are 3 more sessions organised on Zoom as follows. There is no need to register in advance, just login on the day. Queries to Dr Peter Rookes, National Subject Advisor, Exploring World Faiths, pjrookes@gmail.com.

Wed 8th Sept 2021 at 10:00 am For organisers of Exploring World Faiths groups, or those considering doing so

Join Zoom Meeting (hosted Tarang Shelat)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85095929443?pwd=czVmamFLWnQ5SIVEQXRIQzJXSdU1dz09>

Meeting ID: 850 9592 9443 Passcode: 876505

Mon 4th Oct 2021 at 10am Presentation on the Jain Faith by Arvinder Jain—open to all

Click Join ikon on Zoom

Use ID 85886210630 Passcode 710220

Wed 17th Nov, 2021 at 10:00

Faiths Working Together — Open to all

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83806892192?pwd=bjI1ZnJtbmpwSElrQjhlKzJ5bzJoZz09>

Meeting ID: 838 0689 2192 Passcode: 037603

National AGM 2021

The Third Age Trust is holding the 2021 AGM at Chesford Grange Hotel in Kenilworth on Thursday 26th August 2021.

This will be a hybrid meeting with some attendance on line and some in person subject to Covid rules at the time.

The election of three officers and three ordinary directors will be conducted online before the AGM and you will need to register to vote.



To register and to access the nominee supporting statements : —

[CLICK HERE](#)

Do you love chess?



Why not join the new u3a Chess Network, organised by your Chess Subject Adviser, David. The Chess Network aims to help and encourage new Chess Clubs, to share information between each other and to encourage online chess groups.

To find out more —

[CLICK HERE](#)

at the Podium



DO YOU NEED A SPEAKER ?

If you need a speaker for your monthly meeting have you tried the u3a West Midland Web site? There are lots of suggestions and contacts for speakers, click the box to see the list of speakers

[CLICK HERE](#)

If you would like to try for a free speaker there are many organisations who will provide a speaker to charities like u3a, provided you allow them to raise funds for the society or organisation they represent. For example, RNLI is one such organisation and in addition many local branches of national charities will provide speakers for free.

One such speaker who recently came to our attention is Miles Pilling who delivers talks tailored to suit individual needs to raise awareness of Motor Neurone disease on behalf of the MIND Association. Miles tells us that his talks are a mixture of interesting stories and anecdotes as well as information about MIND. Miles also has an interesting collection of his own photographs showing the world as viewed from a wheelchair. Any u3a can contact miles by email at miles.pilling@gmail.com and arrange a free talk where the content can be tailored to suit the needs of your particular u3a.

Push Back Ageism

One of the aspects of the Trust's Push Back Ageism Campaign, working in partnership with the Design Age Institute, is to challenge the designers of products and services which will make life easier for older adults to design products which are appealing and attractive to use, rather than just being based on need.

One initiative within the Design Age Institute is 'This Age Thing', which was set up to bring together a community of designers, businesses, service-providers, researchers, policy makers and older adults to celebrate ageing and amplify positive stories about getting older, but also to challenge designers. They are currently gathering information about the design of walking frames and being able to quote from peoples lived experience and real-life situations adds strength to the challenge. Also, as part of that, the Helen Hamlyn Trust has issued a challenge to young designers at the Royal College of Art to design a walking frame that will look good, but also be fit for purpose. Apparently, 87% of falls in the USA are caused by people falling over with their walking frames, which are very similar in design to those available in the UK.

Do you have a story to tell about walking frames, either their use or their design?

Would you be happy for us to use your story?

We will, of course, ensure that you remain anonymous, we will never reveal your name or any contact details.

If you have a story that you would be willing to share, please send it to me by 20th

August: sandi.rickerby@u3a.org.uk



Re-starting the Great Conversation

*Regional Philosophy Week, 6th - 10th September, 2021
organised by West Midlands u3a*

"The Great Conversation" describes the continuing dialogue about knowledge, reality and existence. Thinkers through the ages, have articulated their ideas, debated them and built on each other's work.



Whether you've ever been in a u3a "Philosophy" group, or have never engaged with the subject before, but wondered what it's all about, why not dip your toes into the metaphysical water with our Regional Philosophy week. Let's "Re-start the Great Conversation".

Each morning at 10am, one hour-long Zoom session will cover a discrete topic then National Subject Adviser, Shri Sharma will direct you to web resources to help you explore philosophy further. If you're talking about life, the universe and everything, then you're doing Philosophy!

If you are a u3a member in the West Midlands and you're interested in registering for this event, please email: u3athegreatconversation@gmail.com with your name, the name of your u3a and choice of session(s) from the list below. We will confirm receipt and then email you at the beginning September with the links for each session.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Monday 6th September - | "Why do Philosophy?" - Richard Batchelor from South Solihull |
| Tuesday 7th September - | "A Modern Utopia? Might global warming push us into finding that elusive state?" - John Cartmell from Redditch |
| Wednesday 8th September - | "Approaches to Practical Philosophy" - Sue Langley from Wyre Forest |
| Thursday 9th September - | "From Burka's to Brexit - a Philosophical Approach to Exploring Topical Issues" - Adrian Barrett of Kingswinford |
| Friday 10th September - | "Key Concepts in Political Philosophy" - Barry Craft from Worcester |

We look forward to starting the conversation with you!

COVID 19

The latest Covid advice is on the national website under Support for u3as – to access the web site and see this advice click here



Nothing is perfect and as always most of it is open to interpretation but there are now no legal restrictions on eg numbers assembling, although the public are advised to exercise caution. However, businesses/organisations have a responsibility to create their own conditions to ensure the safety of their employees/members, and people will also determine individually how they wish to behave.

So it's up to u3as to restart face to face activities where their members are comfortable to take part, and with conditions that your committee feel appropriate to ensure the health and safety of members.

RELAUNCH GRANT

The “Relaunch Grant” mentioned in the recent TAM is available for u3as which may have used their reserves, have lost too many members and/or be unable to fund starting up again until they have recruited new members.

The Board agreed that £100 would be available for u3as to claim from the Barbara Lewis Fund (BLF) to assist with relaunching costs, or opening up again after lockdown.

(The Barbara Lewis Fund is a legacy left by the late former Chair, Barbara Lewis, that is normally available to start ups, and on which u3as in difficulty due to Covid-19 may now claim a £100 grant to aid in getting going again.)

In addition there is also an Open Day grant of £200 available to u3as (once every two years) to enable them to showcase their activities to the public.

Lots of u3as don't realise what grants are available – this is being addressed - so the idea is to let you know what could be claimed by any u3a you know of “in distress”.

If any u3as are “closed during lockdown” or struggling to do anything because their member numbers are falling off, their committee is having difficulty recruiting, and they don't have funds to re-launch their u3as, they should contact the Trustee for the West Midlands, Allan Walmsley, who will discuss the options and will be able to support u3as making applications for the grants.

Allan Walmsley—Regional Trustee

Members Enthusiastic about Restarting Activities

In their responses to a recent survey by Worcester u3a, members are enthusiastic about restarting indoor activities before the end of the year, perhaps in September, and many have indicated their intention to return to meeting in person sooner rather than later. This is, however, an enthusiasm tinged with caution and there is recognition of the continuing uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. Members appreciate that not everyone will want to return to meeting in person immediately and suggest that we remain flexible to support Group Leaders and provide for both the differing needs of members and the potentially unpredictable course of the pandemic.

If you are looking to consult your members to assess their views, have a look at the Worcester survey on [COVID-19: Survey of Worcester U3A members attitudes towards re-starting U3A activities \(2021\) \(u3aresearch.org.uk\)](https://u3aresearch.org.uk/COVID-19%3ASurveyofWorcesterU3Amembersattitudestowardsre-startingU3Aactivities(2021).pdf) and read the report on [a3187dacc4fed3fc26cf7c733d5dd95a.pdf \(u3aresearch.org.uk\)](https://u3aresearch.org.uk/a3187dacc4fed3fc26cf7c733d5dd95a.pdf)

Making Your Committee Bigger !!

This is a “How To” guide on making your committee bigger and better, written by Paul Martinez, to access the document : —

[CLICK HERE](#)

40th Anniversary Quilt Competition

Thank you so much for all the interest we have had in the 40th anniversary quilt competition.

The competition is open for entries between August and November, but discussions are already happening on our closed Facebook group so do join to share ideas and your progress.

Find out more about the competition and how you can get involved on our national website by clicking here

[CLICK HERE](#)



Online Membership Renewals

A regular series of Questions and Answers.

Q Is it difficult to do?

A. If you already have Beacon, then no, its quite easy.

Q. What do I need to do?

A. Preparing for On-line payment involves five steps:

1. Set up a non-personal email address (i.e. a role-based one such as treasurer@....) – advice is on the Regional website.

Set up a PayPal account (see <https://www.paypal.com/uk/home>)

1. Register the account as a PayPal Charity account – PayPal is a US company and so it requires particular documentation that some u3as find easy to provide and others find it quite difficult)

2. Set up Beacon for On-line transactions (contact the Beacon Team and they will activate this stage)

Test that it works before going ‘live’.

If you need more details or want to consider online renewals through Beacon and PayPal, contact me on allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk

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:

[CLICK 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

[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!**

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

MEMBER LINK

Member Link is a project to support, connect and strengthen our u3a movement, sharing resources, advice and support. To find out more : -

[CLICK HERE](#)

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 are 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?

ARE YOU A u3a CHAIR IN THE WEST MIDLANDS ? IF SO :-

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. — Allan

If you want to contribute to one of our newsletters or 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



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.
