

Connect

West Midlands Region

Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire.



November/December 2021

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

A message from your Regional Trustee



Christmas is almost upon us and despite Covid, many u3as have already started their Christmas activities with face to face as well as Zoom sessions. The picture around the West Midlands remains patchy with some u3as forging ahead whilst others struggle to meet again or even make contact. At the end of the day, the success or failure of u3as always comes down to the enthusiasm and energy levels of a few members – members who believe that the social contact and learning opportunities created by a u3a is fundamental to their lives and their community. Therefore, they are prepared to put in the effort, and not just sit back and expect someone else to do it. They are prepared to put up with the inevitable moaning and criticisms of some members, because they know that their efforts are welcomed and applauded by many more members.

Not everyone is cut out to be a committee member, but everyone has ideas, and every member can help in the many other activities that go on within u3as. My message to everyone is to ask yourself what you can do to help your u3a to become a success, an organisation that is valued in your local community. All u3a committees need the support of their members to make changes or just keep activities going in this post-pandemic period – so please, get involved and make a difference within your u3a.

Have a great holiday period – let's hope the weather stays mild and allows us to venture outside – and let's hope that next year finally sees the end of the Covid pandemic.

Allan Walmsley. WM Regional Trustee, allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk

Merry Christmas to all our readers

On behalf of Allan Walmsley, WM Regional Trustee and the West Midland Region Support Team, we would like to wish all of our readers a very merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year .

John and Margaret Aston — Newsletter Editors.



QR Code to Access u3a WM Region Web Site



QR codes are similar to click links, and are just another way of linking to information. This QR code is a link to the WM Region u3a website but the link can be to any document, website or source.

To open a QR code:

Search and download a QR code scanner app from your app store.

Open the app and hold your device so that the QR code appears in the Camera viewfinder.

The QR code will open immediately.

Thanks to Ross on Wye u3a for the idea.

**For direct access
to the W Midland
Region Web Site
click on the link
below : -**

CLICK HERE



National Kindertransport Day 2nd December

The Kindertransport (children's transport) was a concerted effort by the UK government to rescue German, Austrian and Czech Jewish children from Nazi Germany.

The UK took in around 10,000 Jewish children, the first arrived in Harwich on 2nd December 1938 and the last transport left Germany on 1st September 1939 just as WW2 began.

The 2nd December is now World Kindertransport Day.

u3a is marking this with a presentation followed by conversations with Kindertransport refugees and their families, with Dame Esther Rantzen.



Steve Williams, of Arun East u3a, will be delivering his engaging and informative presentation which gives context to the events of 1939.

Steve will present some of the key people, many with a u3a connection, involved in rescuing 10,000 children from the threats of Nazi occupation. He will also be introducing some important figures who are less well known.

After a break, **Dame Esther Rantzen** will be talking to u3a members whose lives were saved and transformed by the Kindertransport migration.

Hear about their different experiences, from those who lived through it, from the next generation ensuring their family's remarkable past is not forgotten, and from the British hosts, who have grown up with Kindertransport foster siblings.

All details and the booking form are available by clicking the box :

[CLICK HERE](#)

Members can also book their place at this special u3a learning event, and many other opportunities, via the [online events page](#). On the National u3a website.

Push Back Ageism

The u3a has recently started a Push Back Ageism campaign with 2 purposes in mind: firstly, to challenge all forms of Ageism and secondly to promote Positive Ageing. We are forming partnerships with other organisations who have the same goals. One of these partners is the Design Age Institute, which is part of the Royal College of Art. They are working to influence policy makers and the providers of goods and services to design what older adults have identified as being necessary for their well-being.

Our role in the partnership will be to collect the opinions and stories of our members on a variety of topics, which we will then share with them and they will use when they approach the designers and providers of goods and services for older adults.

They are currently planning to compile a list of the top 25 everyday objects that are frustrating and difficult for older adults to use. Through our online newsletter, last week we sent out a survey to our members, asking them to tell us what everyday objects they find the most difficult to use.

The replies have been flooding in, we had over 2,000 by the time the survey closed on Friday 12th November. Some of the things identified were: food packaging, blister packs, child-proof medicine and household bottles and TV Remotes with small buttons. The information is now being collated and will be passed on to the relevant designers and manufacturers.

As ever, our members came up trumps, a big thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey.

We are currently planning other activities with the DAI and with our other partners, we will keep you up to date as our Push Back Ageism campaign progresses.

Sandi Rickerby Trustee for the North East
Chair of the Push Back Ageism Working Group





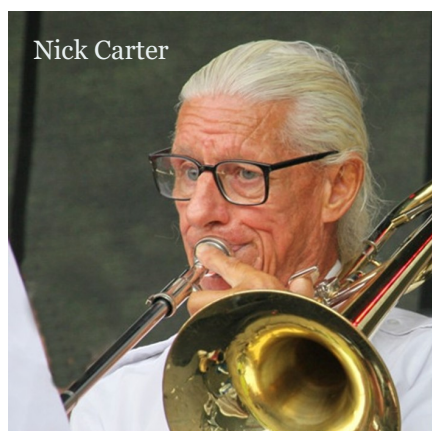
Do you have a group with unusual or interesting activities which you could share with other u3a's ?



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

Balsall Common u3a “Swing Division” (Big Band)

Early in 2016 Nick Carter formed a Big Band (Jazz and Swing) from among u3a members in the West Midlands, the band is now called “u3a Swing Division” and is based in Balsall Common. They meet on alternate Tuesdays starting at 2:00 PM, and rehearse in the The Blessed Robert Grissold Catholic Church in Meeting House Lane.



Nick Carter

Nick tells the story of the band so far as follows — “The ‘classic’ Big Band has seventeen players: four Trumpets, four Trombones, five Saxophones of various types. And a rhythm section consisting of Bass, Drums, Guitar, and Piano. My Tenor Sax friend who helped us set up, the other Tenor Sax and the Pianist were from the Birmingham Basement Band.

I had to sort out a location base; I plotted where each member of the band lived and, with band members coming from Sutton Coldfield, Hall Green, Rugby, Nuneaton, Coventry, Warwick, Leamington, Kenilworth, Malvern, and three of us from Balsall Common, we decided on Balsall Common!

We needed a venue to rehearse at and after much research, we have been, and still are, at the Catholic Church in Balsall Common.

We started doing gigs from 2016 including playing at Core Meetings for Balsall Common u3a, Solihull u3a, the open day at the Sutton Coldfield Water Mill, and at an Open Garden event in Solihull, and at the Balsall Common Festival.

A small band taken from the big band did a special gig. In a lull in the pandemic, we were asked to do a small gig for a surprise party for a band member who was terminally ill who had been a founder member of the band. The members of the sextet had personal connections to him and we did a twenty-minute set.



We now have some 73 tunes on our pad which includes music from Duke Ellington, Jobin, Glenn Miller, Count Basie and Woody Herman. The trumpet player who helped with starting the band, Paul Morris (from Nuneaton) is our Musical Director and lead Trumpet player. Another trumpet player helps me with the bureaucracy”.

The band needs more brass and saxophone members and if you have played in the past don't worry about being rusty as we are constructing a friendly and safe environment to enjoy playing and learning more about this wonderful genre.

If you want to contact Nick Carter directly his email is — bigband@balsallcommonu3a.org

To read more about Nick or the band you can click the box to go to the band's u3a web page —





Help to run Hybrid Meetings

Many of you may be aware that we have been working with a group of Tech skilled u3a members who have been collating and developing resources and information for u3as to run Hybrid Meetings.

This will culminate in a website covering information for running hybrid meetings of different sizes and complexity, How To Guides and short videos, and details of different technology and devices to consider.

We are aware that as most u3as are restarting activities, the need for this information is now and the team will therefore be running drop in sessions that members can come along to via Zoom, to learn about the support that is available and to raise questions and request advice on alternative ways of running u3a meetings.

These sessions will be held every Wednesday lunch time between 13.00-14.00 the link and dates are below. Please can you cascade this information to the committees in your regions.

LRu3a is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting— Topic: Alternative Meeting Methods

Every week on Wed, until Jan 26, 2022, there are 13 remaining sessions all to begin at 13.00hrs

Dec 1, Dec 8, Dec 15, Dec 22, Dec 29, Jan 5, Jan 12, Jan 19, Jan 26,

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly: [https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/tZUkfuqpqzguE93m57siJj8aIJGwx49YALZo/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGppzIpG9GWtBCORpwcHYr4b-vwmHZbj_oOkUqyECI5aFv3H8hlJaorSeHx](https://uso2web.zoom.us/join/https://uso2web.zoom.us/meeting/tZUkfuqpqzguE93m57siJj8aIJGwx49YALZo/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGppzIpG9GWtBCORpwcHYr4b-vwmHZbj_oOkUqyECI5aFv3H8hlJaorSeHx)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/81993153499?pwd=OHM5eTlCS2YxaUdyRlZMcjFLU2tKQTO9>

Meeting ID: 819 9315 3499, Passcode: 754565

If you have any questions, please do contact me -- **Regards Jane Bailey, u3a 020 3874 7625**

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 access it click the blue box



[CLICK HERE](#)

Rogue Website — AI U3A

A notice from National Office —

Our attention has been drawn to a rogue website (<http://www.aiu3a.com/>) purporting to be an international version of the u3a movement. The site calls itself AI U3A and the website is a real problem.

The Third Age Trust (the umbrella organisation of the u3a movement) has tried to locate the owners and send a cease and desist letter - but the Trust's lawyers have been unable to trace an owner. It looks like the website is now no longer supported and the links on it look very suspect.

The u3a membership is now being notified that this website is illegally using our branding and pictures and members should avoid it at all costs. Please circulate this information throughout the membership.

u3a online workshops

There are several pilot workshops which you can book for your u3a. You can also book sessions on zoom for breakout rooms, screen sharing and polls.

Visit the online booking page by clicking the box

[CLICK HERE](#)





Exploring World Faiths — National Zoom Events



At our latest webinar Liz Dancey, from Harborne and Edgbaston u3a, presented resources she has created for the 6 major world faiths, supported by the Arts Society. These include videos, guides and worksheets, which are freely available to Exploring World Faiths groups through the link which will be uploaded to the Subject Advisors' page on the national website. Queries to Dr Peter Rookes, National Subject Advisor, Exploring World Faiths, pjrookes@gmail.com.

Wed 8th Dec, 2021 at 10.0 am Presentation on the Zoroastrian Faith

by Jimmy Suratia, previous chair of Birmingham Council of Faiths

Open to all—Click the link to Join the Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88320298223?pwd=bIZWY2tHQ3MyCHIENkVMYVhoUkxvZz09>

Meeting ID: 883 2029 8223 Passcode: 493046

Mon 10th Jan, 2022 10:00 am -- This webinar is aimed at local organisers of Exploring World Faiths groups and others considering doing so. To join click the link below >>

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82009255381?pwd=RFNwQ0JVZXhOZVByS2p0d2tyVGNWdz09>

Meeting ID: 820 0925 5381 Passcode: 386662

Wed 23rd Feb 2022, 10.0am Presentation on the Spiritualist Faith By Julia Almond, Spiritualists National Union -- Open to all. — See Exploring World Faiths Subject Advisors Page on the National u3a website.

Enquiries to U3a Office

Ever wondered why some of your enquiries to the office go unanswered? During a recent review of resource requirements in the u3a office, the Advice and Volunteering section clocked an average of over **1000** telephone calls per month and between **800-900** emails per month to the generic u3a.office email address. This workload is currently shared between 4 full time equivalent staff, some of whom work part time together with a small group of volunteers.

The review will hopefully lead to an improvement in resources and better access to advice and FAQs via the website, with better clarification when general communications like the newsletters are issued. Whilst the u3a movement is a member organisation and contact with members will always be part of the service, members are asked to think twice before contacting the office. Perhaps their query can be answered in a different way.

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 u3a, 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





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

[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.

Do you use u3a Subject Advisers ?

Learning More About: running a Jazz Appreciation Group with Subject Adviser, Mike Rance

Mike, the national subject adviser for Jazz, has been running a Jazz Appreciation Group in Fleet for the last 10 years and their meetings attract 50 or so people to each of their fortnightly morning sessions.



Mike produces a newsletter in which he says that several group members are willing to prepare talks and presentations. Three or four times a year, they invite professional musicians to talk to them; so far they've hosted more than 20 -- their most recent guest was tenor player Dave O'Higgins. In addition to playing a couple of numbers, and demonstrating their instruments -- drummers and vibes players are particularly interesting -- they give the group fascinating insights into the lives of jazz musicians. The group has to pay them for this, but a small supplement every two weeks to the standard £1 a head soon mounts up.

Mike would like to hear from you if you think he could help you to develop a Jazz Appreciation or help an existing group Group in your u3a. Also if there are any particular resources which you think could be useful for u3a to make available to your Jazz group.

You can contact Mike by email at — **michaelrance71@gmail.com**

To access a copy of a u3a leaflet on setting up a Jazz Group click the box below

[CLICK HERE](#)

To access a copy of Mike's Jazz Newsletter —

[CLICK HERE](#)

Discover more about u3a Subject Advisers on the [u3a Subject Advice page](#).



u3a Growing the Future

To mark the u3a movement's 40th Anniversary in 2022, the Trust is creating a u3a anniversary woodland situated in the Brecon Beacons.

u3a member's contribution to the u3a woodland will help benefit the environment, wildlife and climate for future generations.

The movement's target is for 5,000 trees to be planted between October 2021 and March 2022 and the good news is that we are already half way there, with more than 2500 trees on their way to being planted.

u3a members are able to buy individual trees or a copse of 100 trees and u3as are also encouraged to plant trees within their own communities.

Buy u3a woodland trees on the u3a brand centre.

To access the Brand Centre

[CLICK HERE](#)



COP 26

Thanks to the enthusiastic and energetic leadership of Brenda Ainsley, u3a had a physical presence at COP 26 in Glasgow. They were guests of the Climate Reality group, an organisation of which Brenda is also a member.

Our meeting spot was a brand new electric bus parked in the grounds of First Bus Station.

Many of the roads in the centre of Glasgow had been closed to allow for demonstrations to take place, so it took a while to get ourselves to The First Bus Depot, but when we got there we were greeted warmly, and offered delicious coffee in edible cups.

Our u3a workshops in the bus were based around personal experiences of climate change.

One member talked about how he was involved in environmental work and all three of his children had taken up jobs in the same field. A retired vet talked about his harrowing experiences of working in Africa and seeing first hand children starving because of the impact of climate change on farming. Yet another member talked about his experience of glaciers melting. We also had the opportunity to discuss climate change with young members of Climate Reality and gain an understanding of how they felt.

Brenda Ainsley as leader of the group, was invited to meet Al Gore. She said that he had been well briefed on u3a and seemed genuinely interested in the organisation. She was impressed.

As Trustee for Scotland I was delighted that u3a had a presence at COP26. Climate Change is something that will impact on all our lives and the more we know about it the better.

I think that it's important that older people are seen to be as interested and concerned as younger people and if we work together, change for the better might happen.

Ann Keating, Trustee for Scotland

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](#)

National Newsletter

Read the October archived copy of the National Newsletter by clicking the box below.

[CLICK HERE](#)

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](#)



Celebrating Networks



u3a networks are such an important part of the movement and we know that you want to connect widely with each other.

If you're part of a u3a network, you can soon have access to a brand new newsletter filled with the latest news from u3a networks across the movement. Sign up by using the link below .

Network Link Zoom – 12 October 2021

The Autumn session of Network Link was held on Zoom on 12 October, and 170 members from over 80 networks in the UK. There were four main speakers:

Michaela Moody, Trust Vice Chair spoke about the planned 40th Anniversary events to be held in 2022

Neil Stevenson, Trustee for North West, explained that Beacon is now available for Networks

Allan Walmsley, trustee for West Midlands described the Trust's Trading Company (TATTL) and its commercial activities

Alison May , Head of Member Services, reviewed the ways in which services, advice and support are provided to u3as .

Following the presentations and questions, Network members were split into break-out rooms and invited to consider a number of questions around each subject .

To receive more information about networks, sign up to the Network Newsletter. This will be issued 3 times per year starting in January. All u3a members are invited to sign up whether you are in a network or not.



u3a Day and 40th Anniversary

As 2022 is the 40th anniversary of the founding of the u3a movement, there will be a number of activities planned throughout the year. Details will (hopefully) be released shortly and all u3as will be encouraged to arrange their own activities.

As the summer period is likely to be dominated by events related to the Queen's Jubilee, it was decided to move the date and concept of u3a Day to mid September, not just for 2022 but as a regular slot in u3a diaries. The focus of u3a Day in 2022 will now be 21 September with (hopefully) some national press coverage, but, to accommodate many u3as who want to vary the date for various local reasons, the activities of u3a Day can be any time during the week beginning 19 September.

Nevertheless, the intention is not to waste the summer period, and plans are being developed for u3as to arrange a "u3a Picnic in the Park" in June as part of the Queen's Jubilee events.


For details of the events >>>>



TAM (Third Age Matters) Magazine

We have been informed that the printers for TAM magazine - YM - have experienced severe technical difficulties this month resulting in a delay in the magazine being delivered.





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](#)

Media News

"Research demonstrates consistently that the three most reliable strategies to live longer and well are learning new things, social interaction and physical exercise. All three are readily available from u3a." - Paul from Carlton & Gedling u3a, **in the Guardian**



Social Media News

We will be celebrating National Tree Week on our social media throughout the month so do follow our social media platforms to be involved.

Do you have a tree group at your u3a, will you be celebrating in some way or have you done a tree related activity with your interest group? We'd love to know.

Click the buttons below to see our social media profiles



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





Let's Talk Tech

A dedicated website full of helpful guidance and user experiences for u3a Hybrid (or Alternative) meetings has just been launched.

As experience builds the website will grow with more tips and techniques

To access the Website click the box below



You can also join the Facebook group, where you can find details of weekly Zoom drop in sessions for more help and support. To join click the box



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



Newsletter Express

To read the latest copy of the National Newsletter Express click the box below



ADVANCE NOTICE

U3a day celebrations are now extended throughout a week. Be prepared for the week of u3a celebration.

The dates for the next five years are -

17—25 September 2022

16—24 September 2023

21—29 September 2024

20—28 September 2025

19—27 September 2026
