

# NEWSBITES!

**DECEMBER 2020**

*Sharing ideas across 34 U3As in Nottinghamshire*

# BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND 2021

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF NOTTS NETWORK

The last Newsbites of this unprecedented year of 2020 and, despite things being so very different, it is pleasing that our Notts Network has continued to function and even to thrive. After our meeting in October a number of u3as came forward to host Peer Support Groups and they have been taking place during December. That is one sign of the positivity in the Network: members coming forward to involve themselves. From those volunteering to input at our January meeting, to those sending in photos for our Network website, to those sending in Newsbites articles; all are examples of the vibrancy of the Network. It has also been so pleasing to note the readiness of u3as to help out others when the call for advice or support comes forward.

Thank you to all and I wish you a safe and happy Christmas and New Year. Let us hope 2021 brings more of a return to the u3a we are used to and a chance to meet with our friends face to face.

*Rosie Allen*

## MESSAGE FROM THE NETWORK WEBMASTER

At the end of October Chris Niven sent an email to Nottinghamshire u3as asking for photographs of u3a activities for the network website. There was an excellent response, eight u3as providing photographs covering a very wide range of u3a activities. Some of the photographs have been used to enhance the webpages and a wider selection has been put into a very interesting slideshow. To look through the slideshow go to the network website <https://www.nottsu3anetwork.org/> and under the 'About Us' tab select 'Photo Album'.



## NETWORK MEETING JANUARY 2021

The next **Notts Network Meeting** will be on **27 January 2021**. The topic for discussion will be **Running Interest Groups Online**.

**The deadline for articles and photographs for the next issue of Newsbites! is 15th January**

How did your u3a celebrate the festive season? Any plans for 2021? Anything else you want to tell other u3as.

Articles/photos to [jane.newsbytes@gmail.com](mailto:jane.newsbytes@gmail.com)

## REPORTS FROM PEER SUPPORT GROUPS



**The Notts Network Peer Support Group for Secretaries** had its first zoom meeting on the 8 December, and it proved to be a supportive and informative forum for the sharing of ideas and knowledge. The secretaries who took part came from different levels of experience, some being very new to their roles, whereas others had years of experience, sometimes following being the chair of their u3a.

Everyone had had the same challenges to meet during this Covid affected year, and so all were keen to share their approaches and ideas for continuing contact and activity for members. We think it will continue to be a useful tool in helping the u3a organisation and bringing in new ideas and methods. It can sometimes feel a bit daunting and lonely if you don't quite know what you are doing! Also, even where there is loads of past experience, it is always good to try new things or to consider new approaches and to not get 'stuck in the mud'.

We decided a good first step was to set up a WhatsApp group for easy and quick contact and questions. This will be open to all the secretaries in the Notts Network. We will also meet via zoom monthly, rotating the lead person so it is an equitable place for conversation.

We look forward to this being a supportive, informative and jolly group.

Yvonne Haynes, Secretary, West Bridgford u3a

On 24 November a meeting of the **Peer Support Group for Chairs** took place via Zoom. Chairs from sixteen U3As from across the county discussed a number of issues, sharing their experiences about running u3as in lockdown, initiatives on keeping the various groups and activities involved despite not being able to meet face to face, and how they had coped with running their AGMs. We also touched upon recruitment, recognising this as a challenge we are all likely to face in the coming year.

Neil Hunt, Chair, Arnold u3a

**A Peer Support Group for Interest Groups Co-ordinators** was held on 26 November and points discussed included:

Difficulty in linking Beacon details to corresponding webpage. Worth investigating, but SiteBuilder is bad for this.

WhatsApp used for meetings

Need to keep a focus for meetings on Zoom, based on their group activity.

Several u3as are holding monthly meetings successfully, and sometimes needing the +500 option on Zoom Pro. The Zoom Pro licence is being moved between groups, which works so long as someone keeps track of the timetable. If the group leader doesn't do Zoom, then holding a meeting on Zoom with the group might identify someone who does.

There are alternatives to remote meetings, eg phone and email discussions within a defined time slot.

Virtual Cafe at a defined time for the whole membership to drop in to.

Zoom guidance available on the Notts Network website. Facebook guidance available on the u3a National website.

A second meeting will be set up, probably in the New Year.

Joe Colls, Vic Chair, West Bridgford u3a

**The Peer Support Group for Websites** held its first meeting on 25 November and established that we have some people with excellent knowledge that we can tap into. Primarily, we learned that regardless of how unhappy we might be with our current websites, changing what we have at the moment is not advisable as Beacon 2 may bring some positive solutions. The group will meet again on 20 January 2021.

Carolyn Luckhurst, Chair, Mapperley & District u3a

# u3a IS ALIVE AND WELL IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

## EDWALTON, GAMSTON & DISTRICT u3a

George Golledge, Chair of Edwalton & Gamston u3a has sent the following press release to West Bridgford Local News and thought it could be useful for others to use.

### “Learn, laugh, live with u3a

When you are no longer in full time work or raising a family -we call it your third age– u3a gives you opportunities to develop your interests, make new friends and have fun. Most people are optimistic of a good retirement but the reality is that many of us can be a bit worried about retaining our physical and mental abilities. Keeping active is absolutely critical to a happy and healthy life.

There are more than 1,000 u3as in the UK including 34 in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Each u3a runs itself with an elected committee of volunteers who keep costs low. Utilising our ever-improving IT skills many activities can operate despite social distancing restrictions.

Every U3A has a variety of interest groups. Some of these are study groups such as learning a language. Other popular topics include Family History, Local History, various aspects of Literature, Film and Theatre to name but a few. Popular creative groups include Writing, Photography and Crafts. Walking and Cycling are firm favourites and you can even start your own group.

At the present time monthly meetings with a speaker have had to be put on hold due to the Covid 19 lockdown but members continue to keep in touch with each other on a regular basis due to the increasing popularity of Zoom meetings.

To find your local u3a please visit [www.nottsu3anetwork.org](http://www.nottsu3anetwork.org)”

## MAPPERLEY & DISTRICT u3a

We are doing as much as we can to keep members happy during December. Most groups are operating via Zoom and our walks will go ahead during the month, weather permitting and socially distanced. We showed a DVD of the History of Nottingham Cinemas to 49 members on 2 December. Our monthly meeting will be a week early and we have a magician/mind reader who asks that all members bring a pack of cards from which they will be ripping four cards. We have our annual Twixmas meeting on 29 December that will include a quiz and virtual mince pies. The Wine Appreciation group is meeting weekly at the moment and has issued an invitation to all members to join them at 6pm on New Year’s Eve to say a fond farewell to 2020 and welcome 2021.

Carolyn Luckhurst, Chair

## WEST BRIDGFORD u3a CHRISTMAS VARIETY SHOW

Just to brighten the Covid gloom a little bit, West Bridgford u3a is holding a Christmas Variety Show on Zoom. The show, on 17 December, will involve short performances or presentations by individuals representing a wide range of interest groups. These include musical activities such as ukulele, guitar and fiddle; poems, bird watching and photography; science and wine appreciation. There will be a quiz, and we will conclude with a festive singalong. We’ll let Newsbites know how it went in the New Year!

Joe Colls, Vice Chair

## MANSFIELD & DISTRICT U3A

Mansfield & District u3a have decided to issue our first Christmas Newsletter. This Newsletter includes Christmas greetings, cards, poems, jokes, stories and information.

On the day of our Christmas lunch, which was postponed and will hopefully take place in the New Year, we held a Zoom Games event, which was enjoyed by all participants and brought a smile to our faces and some normality to our lives.

Best wishes for the festive season to everyone from everyone at Mansfield & District u3a.

Carole Harrison, Business Secretary

## BINGHAM u3a

Covid-19 has certainly been a huge challenge to us at Bingham u3a, but we've continued as many of our activities as possible in line with the restrictions, and some that had to be paused during total lockdown have now been able to restart.

However, in a very real sense, it's also been an opportunity for us to widen our horizons and exploit new ways of communicating and sharing our experiences and thoughts with each other.

I'm talking, of course, about moving into the digital future. A vast array of meetings, talks, seminars, films, presentations and entertainment is available to our members and a wide range of expert help is at hand through u3a for people who are unfamiliar with using a computer or smartphone to help them get online and get the full benefit of membership.

As I write this, we're actively working on an exciting and varied programme of virtual meetings, events and group activities for 2021 and, as soon as it's ready, this will be published in our newsletter, on our website and on our Facebook page. The committee members have all stepped up to the plate in a most wonderful and enthusiastic way, and our programme organiser fixed up two virtual events within 24 hours. We've also sent every member a virtual Christmas card and we're running a virtual Advent calendar featuring a beautiful and thought-provoking collection of pictures and verse every day of December until Christmas Day.

September 2020 saw the 20th birthday of Bingham u3a, which Covid-19 sadly prevented us from celebrating as we had planned, but we fully intend to celebrate our 21st instead with an awesome programme of events.

So, everybody, stay safe, stay happy and above all learn, laugh, live.

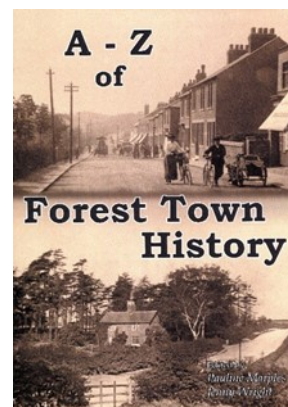
John Lewis, Chair

## FOREST TOWN & DISTRICT u3a

Many months ago an idea for a book on the A-Z of Forest Town History was put to members of Forest Town and District u3a Local History Group as a joint project with the Forest Town Heritage Group. The u3a members immediately started to think of significant Forest Town history items for each letter of the alphabet. Members came up with ideas or researched relevant information over a long period of time. Individual people, in the wider Forest Town community and beyond, were also asked for relevant information and were keen to share their knowledge. The contents grew and while not a letter was missed out, some letters have more than one entry. We are confident that readers will be surprised at what there is to discover about Forest Town. For example, who knows about Living Whist? And, yes, we do have entries for X, Y and Z.

The book, which is published by Forest Town Heritage Group and printed by Portlandprint, is selling well, despite having no meetings or other local functions to take it to. Details about how to obtain a copy can be had from Pauline at Forest Town u3a Local History Group.

Pauline Marples Local History Group Leader



## CHRISTMAS AT HUCKNALL AND DISTRICT U3A



This year we have been 'Dreaming of a Zoom Christmas'. Unable to hold our annual Christmas social event we had a 'Christmas Spectacular' via Zoom on the 9 December. The programme featured a festive quiz, host Terry Hill with his Bumper Book of (old) Jokes, Christmas themed poems, a recording of our last year's 10 minute pantomime 'Cinderella' and a finale of 2 songs live from the living room of The Rockin' Rev Duo, the Rev Ian and Ann Murray.



Many members were in full Christmas livery and enjoyed each other's virtual company accompanied by a drink and party snack. We also have a Christmas film via Zoom, 'Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street' to look forward to on the 17 December.

This year the Hucknall Christmas Tree Festival, which is normally held inside the church, was cancelled due to Covid restrictions. However, in its place there is a Christmas Wreath Festival with the 34 wreaths made by local schools, businesses and community groups displayed on the church railings alongside the Market Place. Our wreath, designed and created by Siobhan Lee the Groups Coordinator, celebrates our Interest Groups.

David Rose, Chair



## SOUTHWELL u3a PARTY IN STYLE!

Starved of much activity since March more than 150 members of Southwell u3a joined their Christmas Party by Zoom on 10 December, the first time our u3a has linked up with so many members.

The Party, coordinated by Social Secretary Brian Platts, featured a variety of musical items and prose readings all with a Christmas theme. These ranged from carols played on a Roland Aerophone to a selection of medieval tunes on period instruments. There was also a sophisticated rendering of Santa Baby, complete with feather boa, a comic song about carol singers, conjecture about the Star of Bethlehem from our Astronomy Group, a reading of Dylan Thomas, reminiscences of a childhood Christmas in Cleethorpes, winter pictures from the Photography Group and more pictures on the theme of religious faith from the History of Art Group. There were also other items, from the Literature, Recorder, and Folk Song Groups. It was all linked together by compere Platts with a series of groanworthy Christmas cracker jokes together with seasonal quiz questions which sparked off fierce competition for the prize of a u3a diary! The rehearsal a few days earlier had been dire with everything Zoom related that could go wrong going very wrong so there wasn't too much confidence for the actual party. However, on the day miraculously everything just about went as it should do, apart from the ubiquitous issue of muting and unmuting, but then that just added to the informality of the event.

Maybe this will be the first of similar parties in the future. Let's hope so!

Chris Bentley, Southwell u3a

## NEWS FROM THE REGION AND NATIONAL OFFICE

### COVID-19

The National Office website is regularly updated to take into account the latest instructions from the Government. The current regulations can be found on the Home page under How to Run Your u3a: Covid and Beyond.



### VOLUNTEER WITH THE U3A OFFICE ADVICE LINE

Do you want to help the movement during these unprecedented times, providing information and guidance for members who are running u3as

We are looking for volunteers with a good knowledge of the U3A movement and the work of committees. Ideally we'd like volunteers who have some understanding of help-desks, knowledge-based software or cloud-based phone systems or who have worked in customer support roles previously.

This role is home-based. Training and support meetings will be held virtually with team members and we will provide the software for you to access our telephone system on line.

For an informal discussion [contact Mingma Norman](#), Volunteer Development Officer.

### *Jingle Bells*

*Dashing through the snow in a one horse open sleigh*

*O'er the fields we go, laughing all the way*

*Bells on bob tails ring making spirits bright*

*Oh what fun it is to laugh and sing a sleighing song tonight*

*Oh, jingle bells, jingle bells jingle all the way*

*Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh*

A Risk Assessment must be submitted before an open sleigh is considered safe for members of the public to engage in recreational trips including the strict application of seat belts and wearing of appropriate protective headgear. The Risk Assessment should also consider whether the use of only one horse is appropriate, particularly if some passengers may be of larger proportions. Permission from landowners must also be gained before entering any fields and extreme care should be observed to ensure that no livestock may be discomfited or otherwise affected and that all gates are closed so that livestock cannot escape.

To avoid offending those not participating in the venture, it is required that only 'moderate' laughter, light jingling of bells and quiet singing takes place and not at a noise level that may cause offence to others.

**Borrowed from Southwell u3a, via Hucknall u3a, but originally from North Pole Health & Safety Office**