



# Newsletter No: 3

**July 2020**

## **Northamptonshire Network of U3As**

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Now that lockdown restrictions are easing, small groups of six or less are beginning to meet in each other's gardens – at least they are in my U3A. So nice to have some semblance of normalcy at last.

It seems virtual meetings are here to stay for a while, and some of our U3As are putting forward the idea of holding a Network meeting via Zoom – perhaps you would let me know if you are interested. You don't have to have Zoom loaded onto your pc, but we would need someone with a Licence to host the meeting and invite those who are interested to attend.

Some are considering the possibility of virtual speakers and are asking other U3As if they have had any experience in this field and if so, can you give them any advice. Let me know and I will forward it on. There's a possibility something of interest might catch your eye in one of the articles and you might want further clarification.

### **Advance Notice of the AGM of the Third Age Trust**

This year you will have the opportunity to 'virtually' attend the AGM of the Third Age Trust (essentially the National organisation for U3A). Any member of a local U3A is eligible to attend and this would normally mean you travelling to a Conference Centre somewhere like Nottingham. This year arrangements are being made to hold the AGM online on 29<sup>th</sup> September but at present the time is to be determined. Nominated committee members will be able to vote, but otherwise you would be an observer and it would be an opportunity to see the National Chairperson and other Officers and staff and to hear about current issues and the "direction of travel". Further details and instructions about how to register to participate will be circulated in due course, so if you are interested keep an eye out or go onto the National Website in a few weeks' time to book your place.

## **Thrapston & District Chairman's July Network Newsletter musings!**

It was great to 'see' the full committee via Zoom at what was the inaugural meeting of the new Committee last month and this month on 17<sup>th</sup> July as a U3A we will break more new ground with our first "Zoomed" 'Speaker's' meeting, using the "Eventbrite" software to book tickets. There is no cost involved to members, but it allows us to monitor numbers involved, which can be up to 100 device log-ins, so more than 100 persons can participate.

I have a very strong feeling that this use of technology will be with us for some considerable time to come; we can console ourselves that meeting this way does have the advantage of being "green" a plus point that cars are not being used to bring members to meetings, but the down side is you do have to provide your own chocolate biscuits.

Going back to issues with the web and information technology systems, we are going to attempt to hold Group Leader meetings next week using the "Zoom" app, while we have begun planning on how to hold our AGM electronically, as the three month pause allowed us under the current constitution will expire on August 21<sup>st</sup>!

(Should we consider going down the electronic route with Network meetings?)

Although recently we have seen lockdown restrictions being eased but not enough yet to consider full "Speaker's" meetings with up to 160 members present; these I feel will still not be allowed for many months to come. Indeed it may be the New Year before things improve, for even with a reduction of 'social distancing' down to 1 metre, by way of all our members masked or "face covered" it would still be logistical nightmare to plan separate exit and entry routes that are sanitised and accessible by all levels of physical ability!

We very definitely live in interesting and challenging times!

Ian Byrnes

### **Annie Curtis, Chairman of Brixworth and District U3A writes**

The Committee is considering purchasing a Business Zoom contract for use over the next 12 months. One of our speakers has agreed to give their talk in this way. We can hold our AGM and be quorate, especially when there will be Officer changes and votes. There will be no end after 40 minutes as now with the free version used by several of our groups. Groups will be able to use this unlimited time system, once logged in by our U3A host.....and more but not yet explored!

All members were contacted and asked for their opinions. Of those who replied, most were in favour, one giving practical advice too. So I would like to ask, please, if you are using Business Zoom in your U3A, do you have any advice? Many thanks in advance of your response. We could even hold a Zoom Network Meeting!

**Gill Potts, Chairman of Oundle U3A** writes:

Our July Newsletter was once again a bumper issue and featured the three winning entries in the Creative Writing competition – Sue Brewer, Anne Browne and Jill Rundle, plus news from many of our groups. Our Quizzes and Puzzles group have kept our minds active with their regular contributions each month.

Our August competition will be for Photographers, who are encouraged to submit photos of ‘Spring and Summer around Oundle’.



Now that up to six people can meet outside, groups are beginning to meet up again face-to face, rather than virtually, although many are still successfully meeting that way. My Shakespeare group met in my garden for the first time at the end of June, after two postponements due to rain. It was lovely to get back together on one of the hottest days of the year so far and we thoroughly enjoyed getting to know *‘Love’s Labour’s Lost’*, which we had hoped to see performed at Tolethorpe this summer - but now on hold until next year.

The Golf for Fun group is very pleased to be playing once more and I know that our Walkers are keen to resume, albeit in smaller groups.

Our Committee met again in July. Our main topics of discussion were Beacon 2, our online banking application, job descriptions for our various Committee roles and the possibility of using Zoom for our monthly meetings, since it is unlikely that large groups will be able to meet together in the near future. We all agreed that concentrating for a long period of time - well over two hours - was exhausting, especially for our Business Secretary taking Minutes, so in future we will have more regular one-hour meetings and focus on fewer items.

Finally, if any other U3As tips on how to use Zoom for a large group of people, please let me know!

**Angela Mason, Chairman of Higham and Rushden** writes:

I am now of the opinion that getting back together on a monthly basis is way off yet. The government have said they don’t expect theatres to be open until next year. Having canvassed some members, they wouldn’t want to come back yet anyway.

So in order to at least try and bridge the gap we have been looking for speakers who can present on Zoom. It has been quite popular and along with the presentations put on by main office it has been well received.

I’m on the hunt for others, so if you know of any please let me know.

Just one final thing - the cup of tea or coffee post meeting will be sadly missed!

## **Carol Lucas, Chairman of Towcester writes:**

First I must say Thank You to our other U3As for sharing your activities and ideas with the rest of us and to Stephne for organising it and Alan for making sure the newsletter go on line. We have had a few issues with our website and email system so it has been great to be able to advise our members that the newsletter is on the Northamptonshire Network site.

Zoom continues to be the chosen method of meeting of many of our groups. We are pleased that an ever increasing number are meeting virtually.

Having said that, our ukulele group did organise a meeting for 6 of them in their Leader's garden. They were so thorough with their planning, numbers, social distancing, car travel etc, even having a plan B in case it started to rain. Guitars are trying to arrange something similar.



Like many U3As we have had to postpone our AGM so we are now considering our options on how to move forward with this.

I continue to send out bulletins at least monthly and encourage our members to send me news anecdotes photos etc.

Our Facebook page has been so well supported. There has been a theme each week for members to post memories. photographs etc and they are also encouraged to think "outside the box". A good example is this week's theme of "bridges" which has included photographs of bridges locally, nationally and internationally, as well as photographs of a bridge game, a bridge in an electric circuit and the bridge on a cruise ship. Members have shared photos of their gardens and their morning walks.

An increasing number have shared pictures of their craft work including old favourites such as knitting, crotchet and card making. However some postings have given rise to ideas for new groups such as quilting and quilling.

Our Music for Pleasure group has been sharing You Tube music by email then meeting on Zoom to discuss it. They recently shared "*Once Upon a Time in Paris*" by the composer Erik Satie accompanied by impressionist paintings of *Parisian Streets* by Edouard Cortes.

The committee are meeting by Zoom and doing as much as we can to support our groups as we ease out of lockdown and they think about re-connecting face to face. I think mainly they will continue to meet virtually as some members do not feel they want face to face meetings but also some of the popular venues where our group meet are not open yet.

Thank you all for your news and hope it won't be too long before we can meet again

**John Bugby – Chairman of Great Oakley & District** writes:

We are all looking forward to seeing each other again and receiving guidelines on the use of Community Centres; however with the guidelines still being written and changing almost daily we are not jumping the gun and will act as soon as the centres are open. Almost all of our groups have been keeping in contact with each other and have been circulating information and photographs between each other and holding Zoom and Facebook meetings. It looks as though we may have to look at making some major alterations to some of the groups and our monthly meetings as several of our groups are likely to be too large for the available premises we use.

As things are opening up more than one group has had distance meetings when the weather allows and we are looking to extend all of our activities as soon as we are able and if members wish to return to as near to the old normal as is practicable.

We send all of our best wishes to all of the other groups and look forward to meeting again.

**Di Tebbutt Chairman of Kettering** writes:

We are still meeting as a Committee virtually once a month and publishing the Minutes on the website. We are continuing to keep in touch via email or over the phone. The Family History Group and the French Group are meeting regularly virtually. The Spanish and English Studies groups are being set homework. We have a Facebook page which is proving quite popular.

Some of the smaller groups are meeting in people's gardens, weather permitting and we are hoping some of the outdoor activities can restart soon.

We did wonder how other U3As were coping with not being able to hold their AGM? We did try to register for the tutorial about running a virtual AGM but was unsuccessful in gaining a place.

**Can someone who's U3A has successfully held an AGM this way, please contact Di Tebbutt and explain how they did it.**

**Karen Gees, Membership Secretary of Brackley** writes

As with all the other U3As, we are not yet able to hold any indoor activities. No one yet has organised an outdoor activity.

Our monthly committee meetings are held by Zoom. They go ok and we find the free 45 minutes is fine for us. Things are progressing as normal as they can. We have had a good number of members renew and have found them to be very supportive. Some groups have been doing Zoom meetings on line and send regular information and correspondence to their members and are generally keeping in touch.

We wanted to keep contact with our members during these difficult times and tell them that the committee had not forgotten about them so we decided to produce a magazine called The Coronavirus Times we have a team who produce this for us every month. Our next issued with be no 7 (coming out shortly) It can be found on our website, sent out to all members on e-mail and those not on e-mail get it through the post. The team wanted to make it interesting so they asked all members to send in any information they thought other members would be interested in reading. Pictures that our art group have done, puzzles to solve i.e. cross words, maths puzzles (answers

could be found on the website) for those not on the internet I print them off and put in a separate envelope together with their copy of time times. We are never short of information from our members. We do always ask if they would like information put in under their name or from a member. Also included in our newsletter is anything that is happening locally i.e. the dates our local library is open and also anything in respect of Brackley U3A.

## **IQUIZ FOR JULY - All Things "Z"**

**The answer to each question starts with a "Z"**

1. A light, foamy custard like dessert served hot or cold?
2. An island off the East coast of Africa?
3. A rectangular tiered temple or terraced mound erected by the Assyrians and Babylonians?
4. The capital of Croatia?
5. A republic in Central Africa formerly known as Northern Rhodesia?
6. A French writer's surname?
7. The largest city in Switzerland?
8. A fervent and even militant proponent of something?
9. Archipelago of 100 islands in North Atlantic off north coast of Scotland which includes Shetland Isles?
10. A Buddhist doctrine that says that enlightenment can be attained by direct intuitive insight?

### **ANSWERS TO JUNE'S QUIZ   Alphabetical US Presidents**

- 1: Martin Van Buren; 2: Millard Fillmore; 3: Franklin Pierce; 4: James A Garfield;  
5: Calvin Coolidge; 6: Woodrow Wilson; 7: Abraham Lincoln; 8: William Mckinley;  
9: Grover Cleveland; 10: Harry S Truman

And to finish: member of Oundle's Flower Arranging group set them all a challenge to make arrangements using flowers and plants from their own gardens and using everyday receptacles other than vases.

