



Newsletter No: 8

May 2021

Northamptonshire Network of u3as

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2nd June at 7.30pm *InterNetwork* 

A reminder that the Northamptonshire Network of u3as has been invited to join the Leicestershire and Rutland Network in an evening quiz via Zoom on 2nd June at 7.30pm. There are still places available, so if you would like to join us to register send an email with your name and the name of your u3a to: coordinator@landru3a.org.uk

So far we have members from only four u3as in our Network who have registered. It would be great to have some more. Who knows where it may lead.

Hybrid Meetings

As restrictions are lifted and we are back to the rule of six, we are back to the conundrum of how to include everyone in the group, if there are more than six in a group. Many u3as' groups already hold hybrid meetings whereby six of the group will meet in someone's garden and the others Zoom in. One of the problems is that those on Zoom cannot see all of those who are socially distanced. Having attended the hybrid meeting session, one or two suggestions were made as to how to overcome this, one being to use more than one device so that one is focused on three people and the other on the on the others. One of my groups had a go last week and it worked very well until the iPhone ran out of juice. But the better solution would be to get a wide angled webcam, so we're going to have a go with that next time.

There is another session at 10.30am on 8th June and if you would like the Zoom link, let me know and I will forward it to you.

Network Event: An Afternoon with Gervase Phinn

With restrictions slowly easing, our talk by Gervase Phinn is set for Friday 15th October 2021, same time and same place (United Reformed Church, High Street, Wellingborough NN8 4HW, at 1.30pm). Tickets that have already been issued will still be valid.

Northamptonshire Network Committee Roles Peer Group Get Together:

Following on from the successful Treasurers meeting, our Speaker Seekers had theirs at the end of March and exchanged lots of ideas. These are great forums for those in like roles to discuss any problems they may have come up against and to see if another u3a has a solution or ideas on how to go forward, so if there are any other roles on your committees that would like to have a get together, do let me know.

I know that Chris Hartny-Mills our new PR Advisor is hoping to organise a peers' group meeting later in the year for those who have taken on the public relations role for their u3as.

u3a Day:

Many of you are organising events or celebrations for u3a Day, if not on the day itself, then possibly sometime in June. Perhaps you will send in articles with pictures for our next Newsletter.

Stephne Tewson County Contact

And now news from some of our u3as in our Network:

Lynne Jones Chair of Daventry u3a writes:

Our committee has been meeting online and working all the while, and for our members we have been issuing bulletins (as opposed to Newsletters) every two or three months during the past year.

When it was realised that face to face monthly meetings were totally off the agenda, our speaker seeker abandoned her lovely existing programme and went on a very steep learning curve embracing getting some speakers online. We use Eventbrite which has worked well. Talks started in December with *British humour in the picture postcard*, January on *Mary, Queen of Scots*, February on *Tales from a Dairy Farmer's Wife* – which inspired a visit when we can safely get there. This next talk in March will be a musical story – *Welcome to the Flannan Island Mystery*.

Although our first meeting 'sold' approximately 50 tickets, the numbers have doubled since then, with many couples watching together.

April is the start of our financial year and would normally be membership fees time. For this year only, we have advised all current paid-up members that their u3a membership will be free!

Here's to better times and friendships – meeting face to face again.

John Bugby Chair of Great Oakley writes:

Great Oakley and District's Secretary has undertaken a lot of work and managed to procure Corby Heritage Centre in Corby Old Village for us to be open for visiting from 12:00 to 16:00 on Wednesday 2nd June and is looking for Volunteers to assist with the display boards and to be there to answer questions.

We are looking to have a new start and are going to undertake a comprehensive survey which will go out when we send the next Newsletter.

We want to know what new activities our members would like to see and help them gain volunteers – perhaps Scuba Diving, Treasure Hunts or Cycling?

We are also looking at a range of options for our Monthly Meetings as it looks as though Great Oakley Village Hall will no longer be available and are going to ask members for their preferred choice for meetings in the future.

In order that we may be able to better meet in the future we are in the process of obtaining a Full Zoom License so the time available for meetings are not restricted and the facility can be used by all Groups.

Helen Hicks of Ise Valley write:

Ise Valley u3a are having a picnic lunch at Wicksteed Park on 2nd June for u3a day. We're taking the opportunity to meet outdoors where we can be in groups of up to 30. We've asked everyone to wear something blue or yellow if possible. The park has arranged an area surrounded by bunting for us to sit.

All we need now is good weather!

We're hoping that this will be the first large meeting leading up to rule changes allowing us to meet indoors the following month.

Di Tebbutt Chair of Kettering says:

After restrictions are removed, we hope to hold a Picnic in Wicksteed Park and rent a stall on Kettering's Flea Market to publicise the organisation. Some of our smaller groups are restarting in June and we have provisionally arranged to hold our AGM in July.

Alan Harris Chair of Northampton u3a writes:

We are now looking forward to recovering from the ashes of this pandemic. Our Group Organisers and Group Leaders have worked miracles to keep 60+ groups operating virtually through various mediums. Following all the problems caused by COVID several Group Leaders have decided not to continue for various reasons, and we are in the process of appointing more Group Leaders so that the number of groups keep growing.

Although numbers have dropped by approximately 20% we are now working towards positive recruitment. Our u3a Day contribution is a meeting in Abington Park with the hope of good weather and attracting plenty of publicity. The communication sub-committee are working on a revamp of the website and more activity on our Facebook page. We have also taken up the regional assistance through the new PR Advisor.

We wish the best of luck to all of our networking u3as in achieving their own recovery plan.

Gill Potts Chair of Oundle u3a writes:

We held our AGM on zoom on 10th May. Prior to the AGM, all paperwork was available to Members on our website. All reports had been circulated in advance and voting was also done in advance, which made for a very short meeting at just 15 minutes. It was followed by a superb talk from Christine Green who told us about her career as a graphic designer for the BBC.

Gill Phillips joined the Network Speaker Seeker meeting last month and found it very useful for sharing ideas and contacts for future speakers. Later this month we have our final joint Mirthy talk with Peterborough u3a. Mirthy have now tripled the cost of their talks as they will all be 'live' in future. We felt that this increase was too costly – what do other u3as think?

I am pleased to report that seventeen new Members have joined since the start of this year. Our new membership cards have been delivered to all Members, with a very favourable response to them.

Our Website continues to get regular updates, thanks to our Webmaster, Barry. We now have an Amusement tab, highlighting courses and interesting websites to check out, plus a Gallery of photos, which will gradually be added to.

Plans are in the early stages for our Recruitment drive in the Autumn – watch this space! Our June Newsletter will celebrate u3a Day and our own u3a. We are hoping for a truly bumper edition, with articles on how our u3a started, how it has developed over the years and also looking to the future.

While on the subject of Newsletters, we now have a new feature, spotlighting a different subject Group each month. The first, in April, was from the Business Group and May's was from Military History. The articles focus on the early days and the development of the Group over the years. 'Learn, laugh, live' certainly applies!

I am sure we are all delighted that some Groups are able to meet indoors again, and that some local venues will soon re-open, enabling larger Groups to get together. We would love to restart our monthly Meetings 'face-to-face' as soon as we feel it is safe to do so. Coach firms are keen to transport us and theatres and stately homes are re-opening, so we hope that before too long we can start running our trips again and we will begin to feel that our lives are getting back to normal.

Ian Byrnes, Chair of Thrapston u3a writes:

As I prepare this I have just voted in the electronic voting for our AGM for the second time in twelve months; how naive we all were back in May of last year hoping to get back to "normal meetings" by July (2020), Thrapston & District will be continuing with Zoom Member Meetings until July 2021 with our first face to face meeting being the Summer Social in mid-August either at the Mid Nene Sailing Club or in the Thrapston Peace Park, still practicing social distancing and all the new tropes that we have learned in the past 15 months.

The new Committee for this u3a was returned unopposed at the 29th April closing date with only one vacancy on the Committee; this I feel is a sign that our members still have confidence in the u3a and those who have spent the last 15 months meeting with a group of disembodied heads in Zoom meetings, do you recall when Zoom was what a military jet did as it went overhead? The Committee of this u3a has been wonderful in their tenacity to keep things going and I look forward in the very near future to having an actual physical around a table meeting, in my entire tenure as Chair all meetings have been on-line!

Membership has held up quite well, at one point we were 30% of our membership down but in the last month a steady number have started to renew membership, Groups status is best summarised by this extract from our Group Co-ordinator's Report to the AGM later this month: *"I held two Group Leader meetings by Zoom one in November 2020 and one in February 2021. Both meetings were extremely well attended and it was nice to put faces to names. This gave us a chance to discuss how things were going. Unfortunately we've lost about 9 groups this year due to various reasons, it was a shame most groups were unable to meet due to lockdown. However some of the groups are still able to keep in touch by email, phone or Zoom. Cake and Bake, French Encore, Ukulele, Italian, Photography, Making music, Bridge, Creative writing have all been able to continue their groups with Zoom meetings."* Anna our Groups Co-ordinator has done a sterling job, having been elected to the role during the pandemic!

Where do we go from here? u3a Day is going to be celebrated on June 2nd by a splurge of posters in shop and library windows, which will also point those interested to the Saturday of that week 5th June when we are going to put up our gazebo bright and early at Thrapston Farmers' Market reminding all who are interested that Thrapston u3a is still a going concern and why not "come and join us" we may in some cases be grey, but neither we or our u3a are down or out!

Thrapston & District extends its best wishes to all u3as in the Network as you 'gird your loins' for a face to face restart!

Carol Lucas Chair of Towcester has sent us the following:

With the gradual easing of restrictions people are feeling more confident to venture out and meet people albeit outside and in small groups. Some of our groups are already meeting outside and as we progress through summer larger groups may be possible. We are so impressed with how many of our group leaders have been in touch with their groups about re-starting. We are also encouraging our members to start thinking about joining new groups and we have some potential new groups starting namely cycling and petanque. Our existing groups continue to be busy via Zoom, Googlemeet, email etc. We continue to produce a monthly bulletin keeping members up to date with the activities of our groups.

Virtual Mixed Craft Group

Our mixed crafters were kept busy with Easter. They are now working on Spring.



The Music for Pleasure Group listens to music by a wide range of composers. On their recent playlist we had the jazz style preludes of Nikolai Kapustin, an unfamiliar name to many. Also on the list was a very familiar name - Vivaldi and they listened to *'Spring'*

from his famous *'Four Seasons'*. This recording is accompanied by some lovely scenes of Spring flowers.

[YOUTUBE.COM Spring, Antonio Vivaldi](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Spring_Antonio_Vivaldi)
[Antonio Lucio Vivaldi \(4 March 1678 -- 28 July 1741\)](#),



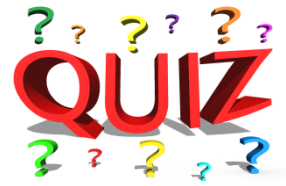
Chess: By the start of 2020 we had managed to build up the group to around half a dozen regular players. We had settled down into a regular venue for our fortnightly meetings. We had started to think about ideas for ways to attract new players, including beginners. We thought that we were doing ok generally speaking. What could possibly go wrong?

If you had told me then that by March we would be in a situation where the entire population was prohibited from going out, travelling or meeting family members, it's unlikely that I would have believed you. But, of course, that is exactly what happened, and it's fair to say that it made things a bit difficult for our chess meetings! So, we had a choice: Either, stop meeting and put the whole thing into deep freeze until Boris gave us all permission to go out to play again, or find a way to adapt and continue. And the obvious answer was to move the whole thing online. We were fortunate, I suppose, that we had the option of continuing online – many other groups did not have the same choice. There are lots of options for playing chess online, but we rapidly settled on www.chess.com which does everything that we want to and has the added advantage of being free! (At this point I thought about trying to include a photo of an online game being played, but in the end, I decided that a view of the back of someone's head while sitting in front of a computer screen would probably have limited appeal). A number of us are now playing chess online regularly. The system is very flexible: Games can be played in the same way as if they were face-to-face, or can be set for one move up to every two or three days, whatever is preferred. We also made contact with a small network of chess players from other u3a branches around the country, and online games are being played with that group also.

AGM and MONTHLY MEETINGS

We are now preparing for our AGM on May 26th and most importantly we have started our monthly meetings on line I am very grateful to the members of the Network who shared their experiences and their speakers at a recent Network meeting especially and gave me the confidence to go ahead with this. We had our first monthly meeting on line at the end of April and more are now planned for the coming months. This has been very well received by our members.

May's Random General knowledge



1. If you dug a hole through the centre of the earth starting from Wellington in New Zealand, which European country would you end up in?
2. Henry VIII introduced which tax in England in 1535?
3. What is the correct term for a question mark immediately followed by an exclamation mark?
4. The average person does what thirteen times a day?
5. It's illegal in Texas to put what on your neighbour's Cow?
6. Which bird is nicknamed The Laughing Jackass?
7. Who entered a contest to find his own look-alike and came third?
8. In which country are there six villages called Silly, 12 called Billy, and two called Pratt?
9. Native to the Caribbean, what sort of animal is the mountain chicken?
- 10 True or false: You can sneeze in your sleep
11. Which US racehorse was the focus of a 2003 Hollywood film?
12. Queen Victoria belonged to which ruling house of the British monarchy?
13. Which novel by Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer prize for fiction in May 1937?
14. Whom did António Guterres replace as United Nations Secretary-General in 2017?
15. The world's first national park was established in 1862 in which country?
16. True or false, The Bahamas is made up of over 700 islands?
17. Both Sir Edward Elgar and Adam Smith have featured on which British banknote?
18. What is the modern day name for Corinium Dobunorum?
19. Which notable Labour MP lost the 2015 General Election seat of Morley and Outwood to Conservative candidate Andrea Jenkyns?
20. American singer Roger Miller is perhaps best known for which hit song and karaoke classic?

March Quiz Answers :

1. Forget-me-nots; 2. Carnation; 3. Crocus; 4. Bloom; 5. A plant that lives for more than 2 years (or lives for a long time); 6. Daffodils; 7. Lily of the Valley; 8. Sweet William; 9. Hellebore; 10. Gladiolus; 11. Benjamin Disraeli; 12. Snowdrop; 13. (a) Frances Hodgson Burnett, (b) John Steinbeck, and (c) Dr. Suess (his last book official book); 14. Speedwell