

## RUTH WESTLEY'S RECOLLECTIONS

"There's something called the University of the Third Age, and John Slipper at the College has put a piece in The Herald asking if anyone is interested. There's a meeting." Thus spoke Dorothy Elgar to me one day in the summer of 1998, or was it '99. Dorothy was keen to go but I, newly retired from a lifetime in education, felt less than enthusiastic. I had a prior engagement. However, if numbers were to be counted, I asked her to include me as an interested party. Dorothy came back fully enthused and we went to the next meeting. Information had been distributed around the village and about 14 people were there. We learnt more. The U3A began to sound like a possibility. More posters were put up and at a meeting again at the College (a free venue, thank you, Countesthorpe College), someone from Market Harborough's thriving group came to tell us, twenty or more people, how they started.

It was from this meeting that eight or nine folk agreed to form an embryo committee. We met at a private house (Michael and Shirley Taylor's, I think) and appointed officers. I left the room for a moment; when I came back, I found that I was chairman!

For two and a half years I watched the membership grow and grow. A constitution was created and accepted by the office in London. Groups, which started at eight or so, literature, singing, theatre, discussion, Scrabble, archaeology, walking and cycling were among the first and quickly increased as the membership saw how it all worked. I left the committee but still feel protective and proud of our wonderful U3A which has filled a gap in Countesthorpe life. It has certainly enhanced mine.