

Countesthorpe U3A Newsletter



Dec 2011 – Jan 2012

Issue 2011/6

Chairperson's Letter

(Tel: 277 5881)

Dear Friends

The nights are closing in, the cold is descending, and I am reminded of the rhyme:

*"The North wind doth blow and we shall have snow;
And what will the robin do then, poor thing?"*

We need to make sure that we are keeping much warmer than the robin. It is a continual battle in our house, because I like it very warm and the rest of the family like it a degree or two cooler. I pile on extra clothes and turn up the thermostat!

It's a good idea to keep an eye on friends and neighbours who are spending Christmas on their own, as loneliness can be a problem at this time of year. I have a friend who told her daughter that she was spending Christmas with her sister; told the sister she was going to her friend's; and told the friend that she was going to her daughter's. She liked to spend Christmas on her own. This all went to plan until they found out!

We have entered into the spirit of Christmas with our Christmas tree at Foston Church. Many thanks to the team who did this for us. It's a lovely tradition and long may it continue. All our groups are celebrating Christmas in their own way.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. We look forward to seeing you all again at our first meeting in the New Year.

With best wishes to you and your families.

from
Ursula Wild
Chairperson

Countesthorpe



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

DIARY DATES: Dec 2011/Jan 2012

Date	Group	Activity	Venue/time
13 Dec	Monthly Meeting AGM	The History of the Musicals <i>Ann Hughes</i>	Village Hall from 1.30 pm (‘speakers’ 2.15 pm)
16 Dec	CHEWS	Main meeting + weigh-in	Margaret’s home, between 9.15 and 10.15 am
18 Dec	Solo Lunch	Cosby Golf Club	Noon for 12.30 pm
20 Dec	SWANS	New Walk & Victoria Park	10.30 am Town Hall Sq
21 Dec	Literature	Any book connected to Christmas	2 - 4 pm at Brook Court
23 Dec	Discussion	“Is Downsizing an Answer?”	Ruth’s home; 10 am - noon
3 Jan	SWANS	Market Harborough Millennium Mile	10.30 am Co-op Car Park
4 Jan	Singing for Fun		6.30 – 8 pm Methodist Rm
9 Jan	Folk Dancing		2.00 – 3.30 pm Village Hall
10 Jan	Monthly Meeting AGM	Twycross Zoo <i>Joanna Hardy</i>	Village Hall from 1.30 pm (‘speakers’ 2.15 pm)
11 Jan	Flower Arranging		2 – 4 pm Village Hall
16 Jan	Creative Writing	Jean Chapman on research for writing	2 – 4 pm at Brook Court
16 Jan	Folk Dancing		2.00 – 3.30 pm Village Hall
17 Jan	SWANS	Thurmaston Town Trail	10.30 am at Mill Lane
18 Jan	Literature	“The Black Dog” by Stephen Booth	2 – 4 pm at Brook Court
18 Jan	Singing for Fun		6.30 – 8 pm Methodist Rm
20 Jan	CHEWS	Main meeting + weigh-in	Jenny’s home, between 9.15 and 10.15 am
24 Jan	Play Reading	(New Group!)	2 – 4 pm at Joan Burn’s
26 Jan	Travel	Charnwood Museum & Taylor’s Bell Foundry	10 am from Village Hall
27 Jan	Discussion	“Monogamy”	Shirley’s home, 10 am - noon

No further meetings in December 2011 for Archaeology, Ethnic Dining, Classical Music, Folk Dancing, Creative Writing and Walking (CARE)

U3A GET WELL CARDS

If you know of anyone in the U3A who is ill and who would appreciate a 'Get Well Soon' card from friends in the U3A, then please telephone Sheila Holmes on 277 2131 with the details.

Tales From a Farmer's Wife

Do you remember Jane Barnes' enjoyable talk about life as a farmer's wife? Well, that was followed up with a late October visit to the farm at Long Clawson - mainly SWANS but other U3A members too. Billed as a Walk and Talk, it also included an opportunity to taste some Blue Stilton cheese, for which Jane's farm supplies the milk.

Recipes are available on the Clawson.co.uk website, details of the new book "Cooking Creatively with Cheese" and you can also leave feedback on the site, indicating that you've met Jane.

PAT'S LOOKING FOR A MAN . . . or two, or three or even more!

Are there any shy, retiring (retired!) gentlemen out there who are brave enough to join the two solitary males in "Singing for Fun" from 6.30 – 8.00 pm on the first and third Wednesdays of each month in the Methodist School Room? We have a great time, singing all kinds of music – but nothing serious! Most of us cannot read music, but we make a pleasant sound under Pat's expert baton, accompanied by David on keyboard. Do come and join us – we don't bite, and you'll really be very welcome!

More details from Pat McMahon on 223 4660

Last minute Christmas gifts? A wide range of U3A items (some free!) is available at www.u3a.org.uk

NOTES FROM THE U3A ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The U3A is a huge success with membership around 300,000. How's that for the Big Society? Personal testimonies read aloud from the platform at the annual conference in Nottingham praised the life changing experience of joining our organisation. Of course it is a life changing experience. People who feel isolated in one way or another find themselves mixing with groups of interesting people in a variety of activities. Retired professionals can enjoy new roles as group leaders and committee members. Socialising is essential for a happy and healthy life and the U3A makes it easy to do so with no forms to fill in, no enrolment, no register - you just turn up. No wonder it's a great success. But let's not pretend it's education, even if the word "university" is in the title.

Estelle Morris, in her presentation, eulogised on the life changing experience of education. She did not mean rambling, history and archaeology groups, and listening to monthly speakers. The baroness was referring to the award of certificates and qualifications. The U3A is a recreational organisation and does not provide these. The U3A is no substitute for the wonderful evening classes we have lost with their access to A levels and beyond. These progressive courses required commitment, involvement and study from the learner; truly a life changing experience.

One of the highlights of the conference was a lecture on particle physics which, together with most of the audience, I hardly understood a word of but it was elevating to be in the presence of an Emeritus Professor. Perhaps all U3As could arrange an occasional academic lecture for their monthly meetings. We are worth it.

Contributed by Mary Essinger

A MESSAGE FROM ANNE TESTER

Action Aid has cancelled Sarah's and Charles's trip to Kenya because of the threats to aid workers and has arranged for them to undertake the same work in another destination (to be identified) next October. They completed their training and met their team and were due to leave mid-October. They have managed to raise the full amount thanks to your generosity!

THE 'AYES' HAVE IT!

On a sparkling October day, fifty U3A members set off to the Palace of Westminster for a visit to the home of the 'Mother of Parliaments'. Arranged by Jenny in close collaboration with Ruth Morrison from our local MP's constituency office, we enjoyed the full treatment!

Clutching our formal invitation cards from the Rt Hon Andrew Robathan, we passed through security and entered via the magnificent Westminster Hall – originating from 1097, with its wonderful hammer-beam roof commissioned in 1393 by Richard II. This is the oldest part of the Houses of Parliament complex and is reputedly the largest single-span mediaeval building in the UK. Brass plaques in the floor indicate where monarchs have lain in state on their death, and also where King Charles I was tried at the end of the Civil War.

Meeting up with our guides, we toured the building in three groups, seeing all the places with which the TV now makes us familiar and others previously unseen. We marvelled at the opulence of Pugin's interiors which complement so beautifully Barry's Gothic revival exterior. Statues, busts, paintings, furnishings, panelling, carving in wood and stone were on every side until we felt our eyes could not take in any more. We marvelled at the opulence of the Queen's Robing room and the Lords' Chamber, with its gilding and red leather seating. Then back through the Central Lobby and on to the Commons Chamber which seemed, in contrast, to be quite austere – no gilding here, just the green benches so often seen on TV!

We had time for lunch in the Jubilee cafe, and returned to Central Lobby to witness the Speaker's procession at 2.30 pm as he moved into the House of Commons to open the day's business. Then it was time to visit either the Lords' Strangers' Gallery or the Commons' Public Gallery to listen to proceedings before tea on the Terrace overlooking the Thames. At a long table, sandwiches, scones and cakes were provided, and later we were joined by Andrew Robathan, who answered a number of questions put to him by our group. Then there was just time to visit the Lords or Commons once again, and to visit the gift shop before making our way out of the Palace to meet our coach for the return journey.

"When you said the coach will leave at 6.30 pm we wondered what we would do all day. When we left we felt we had just touched the tip of the iceberg and would have loved to have seen more", commented one of our party. I think this view was shared by all, so when voting if the day was a success – then the 'Ayes' definitely have it! Thanks as usual to Jenny!

June Hawkins

FOLK DANCING



No more meetings now until after Christmas. We then meet as usual, 2.00 – 3.30 pm in the Village Hall on the first and third Mondays of each month (starting 9th and 23rd January).

Recently we borrowed sets of longswords and tied ourselves in patterns with them, conventionally called 'locks'. This was a change from our usual concentration on English Country Dance, and our pre-Christmas music which fitted several of our favourite dances. Everyone is welcome to come and join in. Just bring your sense of humour and wear comfy shoes!

Details from Patsy Paterson on 277 6259

www.countesthorpeu3a.co.uk

Our official website gives the basic information about our U3A, plus a very comprehensive 'What's On' section, pages for each Activity Group (some of which change regularly to include reports on recent events, or other items) ways to make contact with us, and access to lots of pictures including many from outings and holidays. See also the STOP PRESS on the homepage for up-to-the minute news. You can also download the current Newsletter and a printed version of What's On.

News/changes to: jhawkins45@talktalk.net or tel: 277 6330.

Please be assured that the printed bi-monthly Newsletter and the monthly update 'What's On' (*Marketplace*) will continue just as usual!

Latest copy dates for your contributions!

- Wed, 4 Jan for the January What's On and website update
- Wed, 8 Feb for the February What's On, next Newsletter and website update
- Wed, 7 Mar for March issue of What's On and website update

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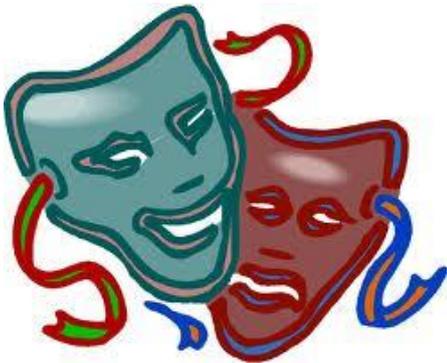
GIFT AID

Have you signed a Gift Aid form for your U3A subscription? If not would you consider doing so?

As a registered charity we can reclaim 25p for each £1 you pay.

For our U3A to qualify for gift aid on your annual subscription you need to be a taxpayer and wish the charity to benefit from the Gift Aid Scheme. Sue Wyllie has the necessary forms for completion and you can contact her on 284 9959 or at the monthly meeting.

NEW PLAY READING GROUP



The initial meeting of this group took place on 22 November at Joan Burn's home with five people present. After discussions, it was decided that we should meet on a monthly basis on the third Tuesday of the month and that we would rotate the venues for the meetings, which would be held from 2 – 4 pm.

It was also decided that we would choose a set of plays by common agreement from the list received from Leicestershire Libraries. We have already joined the Library as a group member, and plays are available from Southfields Library.

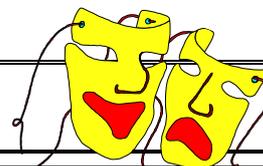
The first meeting will be at 2 Linden Farm Drive on Tuesday, 24 January 2012. We hope to see you there if you have an interest in this activity

*Joan Burn, Lana Fox and Margaret Woolley
(Tel: 277 5369)*

THE WORK OF THE AIR AMBULANCE

We have a speaker on this topic for our monthly general meeting on 10th April, which happens to fall on Easter Tuesday. Although this date is so close after the holiday, please do come along as usual and support this speaker and the great work done by this organisation.

THEATRE PROGRAMME



Date	Play	Cost	Venue	Leaving Village Hall	Pay by
Wed 18 Jan	Gondoliers	£28	Royal Theatre, Northampton	6.00 pm	8 Nov
Wed 15 Feb	Nutcracker	£29	Milton Keynes (2.30 pm)	12.30 pm	13 Dec
Tues 23 Mar	Under Milk Wood	£16	Market Harborough	6.45 pm	10 Jan
Tues 24 Apr	Joseph	£18	Curve	6.15 pm	14 Feb
Thurs 17 May	Top Hat	£49	Aldwych, London	9.30 am	20 Dec
4 June	Twelfth Night	£26	Tolethorpe (Buffet + £21)	4.45 pm	10 Apr
Tues 3 July	Lord Arthur Savile's Crime	£16	Market Harborough	6.45 pm	8 May

GONDOLIERS: Spend the evening in Venice (*OK – actually Northampton!*) enjoying this favourite Gilbert and Sullivan operetta.

NUTCRACKER: Matthew Bourne's modern interpretation of this favourite Tchaikovsky ballet, with Anthony Ward's marvellous sets and costumes. Not to be missed!

UNDER MILK WOOD: (*Dylan Thomas*) An all-seeing narrator invites the audience to listen to the dreams and innermost thoughts of the inhabitants of the imaginary small Welsh village, Llaenggub.

JOSEPH: The top favourite musical comes to Curve. Coach both ways.

TOP HAT: Fabulous musical based on Irving Berlin's music, starring Tom Chambers (*2009 winner of Strictly Come Dancing*) Book today only!

TWELFTH NIGHT: Shakespeare's well-loved comedy, set in the open air theatre at Tolethorpe. Take a picnic, or buffet for £20. Late home!

LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME: Based on the story by Oscar Wilde. Lord Arthur is told by a fortune teller that he will commit a murder. Being a gentleman, he resolves to do the deed before his marriage to Sybil. But if it can go wrong, then it will!

June Hawkins – tel: 277 6330 or email: jhawkins45@talktalk.net

Car parking is normally available at the village hall, but please leave your car as far to the rear of the car park as possible