



Dec 2024- May 2025

CHAIRPERSON'S LETTER

As I write this, we are about to mark the 25th Anniversary of our founding as a local **u3a** back in 1999. The special event that will have taken place on the 12th of November, will be an opportunity to celebrate all that has happened over the last twenty-five years. It will also be a time to look forward to the future as we remind ourselves what we are capable of and invite others to see for themselves – and hopefully to gain some new members!



The list of activities that we have offered over the years is phenomenal! Some have continued to run ever since we began, some have come to a natural end, and there are still new groups being developed. Can you remember some of the names of the old 'groups'?

In all of this, one thing is very clear. That we are a 'people' organisation which exists to serve our local communities. The qualities of 'Learn, Laugh and Live' that are the ethos of our parent **u3a**, The Third Age Trust, are central to who we are and what we can offer.

I suspect that many of us can tell stories of how we came to know about our own **u3a**, why we joined and what we have discovered since we joined. These stories are an important part of who we are and also remind us of what we can offer to each other.

I have said before that at the heart of the **u3a** movement is the desire to offer a spirit of friendship and a sense of community belonging that lifts us all up and gives us so much. At the heart of our **u3a** too, is the desire to offer our time, gifts and skills and to help each other to grow. The future of our **u3a** depends on all of us.

. . . continues overleaf

If you feel that you can offer something special to our **u3a** as a group leader or committee member, then do please speak with me or any committee member. We are always delighted to hear from you!

Finally, it has been a pleasure for me to serve you as your Chairperson over the last year and thank you for all your kind support. I would like to wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas. However you are celebrating, I hope this Christmas is all that you would like it to be.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and every Blessing for the New Year.

David Hebblewhite
Chairperson (Tel: 0116 479 0945)

CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2024



86 of us enjoyed a great start to our Festive Season with our usual excellent lunch, courtesy of Taste Restaurant at Leicester College. The students really do an excellent job of looking after us, decorating the tables, and producing and serving a really good choice of meals.

Congratulations to the Prize Draw Winners this year:

1st Prize: Maureen Pointon
2nd Prize: Sue Johnson
3rd Prize: Alison Gagin

Save this date for our next Christmas Lunch: Friday, 5 December 2025!

MONEY MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND

However, with banks closing all around us, paying in coins is becoming a bit of a problem. Small denominations are particularly difficult, as the Treasurer has to hoard them until such time as sufficient are available to fill the requisite banking bag.

So, it would help greatly if ALL MEMBERS WHO PAY BY CASH – whether at Activity Groups or for membership fees – would please pay ONLY in notes, £2, £1 or 50p coins.



A WORD ABOUT u3a MATTERS

As most of you know, each individual local **u3a** is a charity in its own right, operating according to the model constitution and under the auspices of the Third Age Trust. To further this sense of belonging to a national organisation, the magazine **u3a Matters** is available to every full member. The system set up by the Third Age Trust assumes that every member who is registered with their local **u3a**, and therefore for whom we pay a capitation fee, will receive the magazine.

On occasion, some members have chosen not to receive this and accordingly, our membership secretary informs Third Age Trust of this, and in due course (systems are slow!), they are removed from the mailing list.

This does NOT affect the individual's membership, or the capitation fee we pay to Third Age Trust per member. Also, we do not pass on any mailing list to any other organisation.

So, it is your choice. You will automatically receive the magazine unless you choose to opt out by informing Barry Hillyard of this, by calling on 0116 277 4187 or by email: barry@bhillyard.plus.com

ALL ABOUT MEMBERSHIP – HOW TO JOIN OR RENEW SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE, PLEASE!

To join as a NEW member, please either go to the website membership page, click on the attachment and download the form OR ask the Membership Secretary at a monthly meeting. All instructions are on the form. For the period Nov 2024 – May 2025 **NEW MEMBERS** will have **FREE** membership up until renewal due on 1 June 2025. This does NOT apply to existing/lapsed members! *(The form is still required for our database.)*



To RENEW your membership for 2024/25, subscriptions are:

Full Membership: £20 (pay by BACS, cash or cheque)

Associate membership (with proof of full membership of another **u3a**) costs **£10** (pay by BACS, cash or cheque)

1. There is no need to complete another membership application form
2. **BY BANK TRANSFER:** Payee: The Countesthorpe **u3a**. Sort Code: 40-12-35 A/c no: 01402889 It is **IMPORTANT** that you use your **u3a** membership number as the reference, FOLLOWED by your name. If you do not know your number, call Barry or June who will help you.
3. **BY CHEQUE:** payable to "**COUNTESTHORPE u3a** " to our Membership Secretary, Mr B Hillyard, 35 Station Rd, Countesthorpe, Leicester LE8 5TA. You can also use the **u3a** deposit box at the Library/Parish Office.
4. **BY CASH:** *(Least preferred!)* To our Membership Secretary, Mr B Hillyard, 35 Station Rd, Countesthorpe, Leicester LE8 5TA.



IF YOUR MEMBERSHIP HAS LAPSED, then please follow the instructions for new members as above. Fees are as shown. If you are unsure whether your membership lapsed, then please contact Barry on 277 4187.



MEMBERSHIP CARDS will not be issued, as little use is made of them. Proof of membership can be provided on request to Barry, if this is required.



KEEPING OUR RECORDS UP-TO-DATE: If you have changed your phone number(s), address or email, please advise Barry or June to enable us to update our system and thus keep in touch with you.

If anyone has any ideas to improve our Newsletter, or any contributions for the next issue, then I would be very pleased to hear from you – just contact me by phone on 0116 277 6330 or by email at june.norris45@talktalk.net

POP UP BEGINNER'S UKULELE

4 SESSIONS ONLY

Would you like to learn the ukulele? It's a great little instrument that's very easy to learn because even with just a few chords there are lots of songs you can play. In just four sessions you'll find you can strum to several - such as Amazing Grace, Sloop John B and Whiskey in the Jar.

You don't need any musical knowledge or a musical 'ear' and learning an instrument is often cited as something to keep our brains healthy as well as giving enormous pleasure. It's also lovely to play and spend time with others. We're also lucky enough to have our own Ukulele group and you'd be able to move on to join us if you wanted.

We'll start as soon as we've two people interested, at a mutually agreed time, hopefully in the New Year. Julia, who's just learnt said: 'I can't believe that from being a complete beginner I can now, after four sessions, play some tunes on my ukulele!'

You can contact me at sulizhow@hotmail.com and I look forward to hearing from you!

Sue Howard



CELEBRATING OUR SILVER ANNIVERSARY!

Our usual monthly meeting took on a distinctly different character in November, as we proudly celebrated our 25th birthday. (*How many of us can remember our own 25th birthday, I wonder!*) It was planned as an Open Day to celebrate the developments over the last quarter century, recognise the vision and hard work that has gone into making our **u3a** what it is today, and also to attract new members.

A small sub-committee was given the task of shaping and organising the event, and ensuring that all the little details fell into place on the day. Group Leaders played their part, organising displays to tempt new participants. Dave Tibbles should be mentioned here, as he was absolutely great at sorting out the room layout, and a myriad of other details throughout the event. There were a very few “hiccups” but like the SWANS, we paddled furiously under the surface and all was serene above!

Our Chairperson, David Hebblewhite, opened proceedings by introducing our Founder Members (some of whom were able to be present), and all past chairpersons. He then mentioned some of the groups which have been and gone – a very interesting list, which I have reproduced elsewhere for you to browse through and see how many you remember! Then it was over to the Handbell Ringers to entertain us, followed by the Ukulele Group.





Next, Ruth Westley (as the first chairperson) cut the celebration cake, and then it was over to the stalwart kitchen crew to bring out the refreshments and supply endless teas and coffees, as everyone chatted and enjoyed the displays around the room. Our very sincere thanks must go to Margaret Cronin for organising the refreshments.

The Group Leaders did a fantastic job, setting up displays of their activities (even playing a game of bridge!) and generally speaking to people about what goes on in their meetings to encourage new

members. Long lists of previous Outings, (including those from the now defunct History group) Theatre trips, Holidays, Discussion topics and books read by the Literature Group were on display to show the depth and variety of activities we have enjoyed.



It was a delight to welcome back some members who do not often get to our monthly meetings. To name but a very few, John and Vicky Armstrong (founder members), Margaret Woolley (all the way from Exeter), Shirley Taylor, and Wyn Warwick. Everyone seemed to be enjoying the happy atmosphere, the nibbles and sweets, and just generally celebrating our wonderful **u3a**.



All too soon, though, it was time to beginning packing everything away, but not before some 29 new members had been welcomed! This exceeded our expectations which was excellent, and grateful thanks to all who made the event so successful

Note that membership for all **NEW** (not renewing or lapsed) members is **FREE** up until first renewal on 1 June 2025, so there may still be more people keen to join us.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in joining us, then do bring them along to our next meeting, and introduce them to the delights of **u3a** membership!



Here's to the next 25 years!



NOTES ON ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP AND GIFT AID FOR ALL MEMBERSHIPS

Associate Membership is **ONLY** available to individuals who have proof of FULL membership of another **u3a**. The current Associate subscription is £10 whether paying by BACS, cheque or cash (*least preferred*).

Please remember that when an individual has kindly 'gift aided' their subscription, they **MUST** be paying income tax to HRMC. Tax rules and especially thresholds change, and if anyone finds that they are no longer paying income tax it is **THEIR RESPONSIBILITY** to inform Barry Hillyard (Membership Secretary) on 0116 277 4187 so that their name can be removed from our Gift Aid claims. This is really important and we ask for your help in ensuring that we remain 'legal'! Please do continue to 'gift aid', though, as long as you are eligible. Thank you for your co-operation.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

This will be in the Village Hall, Countesthorpe
on 13 May 2025 commencing at 2 pm
followed by a speaker or entertainment

A G E N D A

1. Approval and Acceptance of 2024 AGM Minutes
2. Chairman's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Adoption of Accounts
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner for Accounts
6. Election of Executive Committee



WANTED! CAN YOU HELP?

June Norris (*formerly Hawkins*) is stepping down from the committee at the AGM, and one or more replacements are sought to take over the tasks she has carried out for some 20 years. As Information and Publicity Officer, June produces the monthly What's On, the twice-a-year Newsletter, the PowerPoint presentation shown at the start of meetings, and also the Group Activity information sheet and leaflets, along with other miscellaneous items. She is also responsible for maintaining the website content.

The role has also recently been successfully combined with that of Groups Co-ordinator, though this would very easily stand alone.

If you have word processing skills, a reasonable degree of computer literacy and feel that you would be interested, then please contact June by email at: june.norris45@talktalk.net or call her on 0116 277 6330 for a chat. She will be very willing to provide support and guidance to anyone who takes over.

Unless somebody does take over, of course, none of the above items will be available to members after the AGM in May 2025.

Do You Remember These?

Bird/Bat Boxes	Model Aircraft Flying
Bridge for Beginners	Beading
Card Games	Spanish
Archaeology	Play Reading
History	Recorders
Computing	Singing for Fun
Family History	Ethnic Eating
Gardening	Silver Strollers
Garden Appreciation	Bread Making
Cycling	Social Events
Gentle Cycling	Pork Pie Making
Mah Jong	Craft Circle
Table Tennis	Ten Pin Bowling
T'ai Chi	Drawing for Beginners
Tennis	Photography
Nordic Walking	Country Dancing
Guitar	Pilates

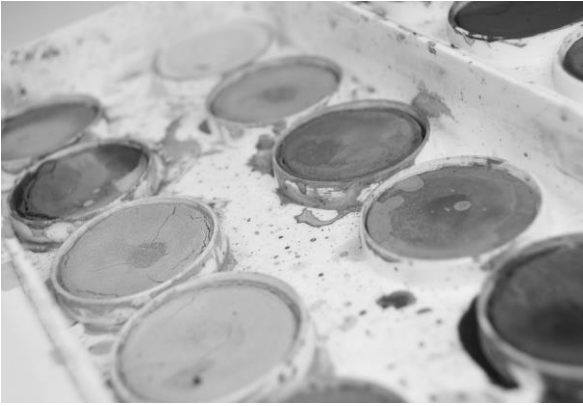
Why not revive a group if you are interested, or suggest new ones to any committee member. There's lots of help and support available to get you started and you don't necessarily have to lead the group, either!

NEWS FROM SOME OF THE GROUPS

Full details can be found on our website (www.countesthorpeu3a.co.uk), or on the coloured Activity Groups List, the monthly 'What's On', or in the leaflets in the display racks at monthly meetings in the Village Hall foyer

ART

Pam Whitehead on 277 8855 or Tricia Brown on 291 2241



We meet each Thursday at the Methodist Church in Wigston Street.

The group has increased to 14 on most sessions.

We hope you enjoyed looking at some of our work at the Silver

Anniversary display in November. We are an informal group, helping each other and enjoying producing a wide range of work. We normally have an outing to Patchings Art Centre in Nottingham once a year. If you are interesting in painting, just call or come along.

WALKING (CARE)

Jenny Barradell on 277 3396



2025 will see a new leader take on this group, as Allen Donkin makes way for Jenny Barradell. Allen has been a stalwart of the group for more years than he probably cares to remember, and everyone is extremely grateful for his hard work and dedication over the years – ensuring enjoyable and safe

walking for so many members. Allen will still be walking with the group, though, so you will have a chance to thank him personally.

Did you know that each month there is a short report on the walk and an accompanying picture on our website? Go to our website and click on the Activity Groups tab > Walking (CARE) and click on it to find the last six months' reports.

BIRDWATCHING

Janet Easey on 277 2544

Our Birdwatching group has functioned much as before, though we have lost a few stalwarts and gained some new members.

We visit various Nature Reserves in the surrounding counties, where we see mostly water birds, with the occasional treat such as a Stonechat or Marsh Harrier.



Normally we meet on the first Thursday of the month, and travel in shared cars to walk, watch and (importantly!) enjoy lunch.

THEATRE

Janine Tibbles on 07970 648979 or Gill Brown on 07757 007025

Would you like an evening or an afternoon out with friends? Do you enjoy live theatre? Is it easier for you not to have to drive to see a show?



If the answer to these questions is 'yes' then come and join us for a Theatre Group outing. We try to book a variety of musicals, plays and pantomime and all prices include coach travel. More accessible seats are available for some shows.

Forthcoming attractions include Mother Goose pantomime (Jan), Tina – the Tina Turner musical in March, and Deathtrap in April (with time for shopping/lunch in Market Harborough before the matinee).

Janine and Gill would love to see you on one or more of our visits. Interested? Come and book in the small lounge at any of the monthly meetings or ring us to book your place.

SOLO SUNDAY LUNCH

*Hilary Natzel on 277 1176, or
Carol Kenneth on 277 8999*



Solo lunches continue to be popular and we now have regular attendances of about 20+ diners. We continue to try out new venues within the local area and would like to see a few new members. So don't eat alone on a Sunday – this is a really good way to make new friends. Sign up and select your meal in the small lounge at monthly meetings, or call Hilary or Carol.

HOLIDAYS

Jill Clayton on 277 7154

Earlier this year, we enjoyed a “Scenic Pennines” holiday – with a wide variety of visits, a canal boat trip, a steam train ride and lots more. The report appeared in the previous issue, which can be found online.

In June, we look forward to another holiday – this time in the south – centred in Kent, and taking in National Trust properties and a visit to the Royal Historic Dockyard at Chatham. Details and a booking form are available on the website, so have a look at what is on offer, and you may be encouraged to join in. You will find that everything is so well planned that there is no hassle – just lots of enjoyment.



OUTINGS

David Hebblewhite on 0116 479 0945



Unfortunately, the outing to the National Memorial Arboretum had to be cancelled, due to insufficient numbers. But in December we visited Belvoir Castle enjoying an excellent (private) tour of the house with time afterwards to sample the delights of the Retail Village (or simply the Bistro!). On the way home we made

a stop in Melton Mowbray with enough time to stock up for Christmas from Ye Old Pork Pie Shoppe. No outings now until Springtime.

DISCUSSION

*David Fagg on 07775 730378 or
Janine Tibbles on 07970 648979*



The Discussion group meets on the fourth Friday of each month at Brook Court in the residents' lounge.

Subjects recently discussed include:-

Food Security; Holiday Experiences and Comedy

You could assume we keep ahead of current topics - that's more luck than judgement! At the end of each meeting, we agree a subject to discuss at the next meeting. On most occasions, we never reach a definitive conclusion, but enjoy exchanging views, ideas and experiences. We keep the group size to a level which enables everyone to contribute.

To some, the best part is the informal chat over tea, coffee, water and biscuits at the end of the discussion.

Find the next topic on "What's On" on the website, or the printed What's On distributed at the monthly meeting. Contact Janine or David if you would like to have more information.

Monthly costs are just 50p room hire and 50p refreshments.

BRIDGE

Alan Rooks on 277 2484

The Bridge Group is flourishing, having now finally recovered from the pandemic, we are now seeing good regular attendances, and new members from the Silver Anniversary!

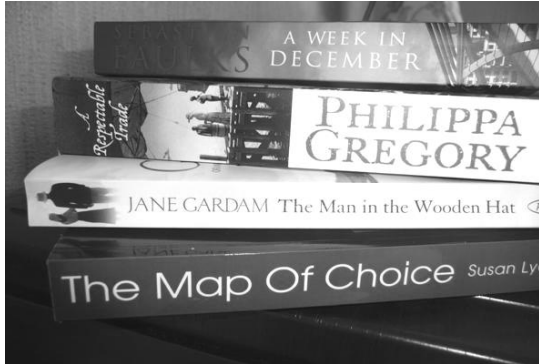
Why not come along and join us. You don't need a partner, as this is drawn on the afternoon.



LITERATURE

Beryl Lishman on 277 0405

We meet at Brook Court at 2 pm on the third Wednesday of the month to discuss a previously identified book. Sometimes, it is not a specific book, but might be anything by a certain author, or even from



a specific genre. Holiday Reading allows a totally free choice and gives fellow members a lot of different ideas for their personal future reading. We are a very informal group, enjoying refreshments after our deliberations. Group leadership rotates every six months. A report on our discussions is

displayed on the website for six months. If you enjoy reading and would like to chat informally with a friendly group about your reading, then you would be very welcome to join us!

CREATIVE WRITING

Mikki Wilde on 277 5509

We were very pleased to be able to offer our sixth compilation of writing to **u3a** members as part of the 25th Anniversary celebrations. Our grateful thanks to June for editing and production and also to our **u3a** committee for funding "Mélange". We hope everyone will enjoy our work, and perhaps be encouraged to join our group.

A steady core of members meets on the third Monday afternoon of each month in the residents' lounge at Brook Court, 2- 4 pm. A new member has just joined us since the November general meeting.

More in-house workshops are planned along with our monthly themed pieces.

As a friendly and supportive group we welcome anyone who is interested in finding out more about us. Do come along!



UKULELE

David Wild on 277 5881

The group appears to be going from strength to strength. We played at the 25th Anniversary celebrations, and have been invited to several other venues to perform. We meet each Wednesday morning from 11 am until noon, and enjoy practicing and playing a variety of tunes, singing along as we strum. If interested, please call David.



CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS

Ursula Wild on 277 5881

The Cryptic Crossword group meet on the first and third Monday afternoons of each month from 2.00 pm until 4.00 pm where we put our heads together to solve the cryptic puzzles, discussing the clues and the compilers etc, and working out the answers where possible (the answers are on the back of the sheets so that nobody needs to get too frustrated). A couple of us can even sometimes complete the crossword without looking at any answers!

Of course we have lots of time to chat with tea, coffee and cake provided. Having said all this, we are not really looking for new members just at the moment as it would mean we would have to relocate, but we do use a waiting list.

PICKLEBALL

Sheila Pennington on 07703 290886



Meeting in the sports hall at Countesthorpe Academy (or outside when exams are taking part), a good number of members are enjoying this new sport. It is part badminton, part table tennis and part tennis and especially suited for seniors! We normally meet 11 – 12 noon on Saturdays or 2-3 pm on Sundays. But, please check What's On as things can change. Equipment is provided, just come suitably clothed and shod, with a drink. Let Sheila know if attending.

FIT FOR LIFE

Diana Lee on 277 9142



Let's get moving! Our weekly exercise class is keeping our bodies and minds working. Also, it's a good class to meet and make new friends.

To the male members of the **u3a** - don't be put off, we are a very friendly crowd!

Come and join us Mondays, 11-30 am – 12.30 pm (Village Hall).

CHEWS

Ruth Westley on 277 1533



The small CHEWS group continues to meet on the first and third Thursdays of most months. We weigh and record our status, congratulate or perhaps commiserate, and exchange ideas - including the state of our lives and the world in general.

All genially put to rights in half an hour in a member's kitchen! Why not join us?

FRENCH CONVERSATION

Dorothy Ivatt on 07411 163396

We now have 10 members in this group. Ability ranges from rather rusty 'O' Level French, to much better fluent speakers. New members are always welcome.

We meet on the first and third Mondays of the month from 10.00 - 11.00 am in the small lounge at the Village Hall. A small charge applies.



HANDBELLS

Pat Hillyard on 277 4187

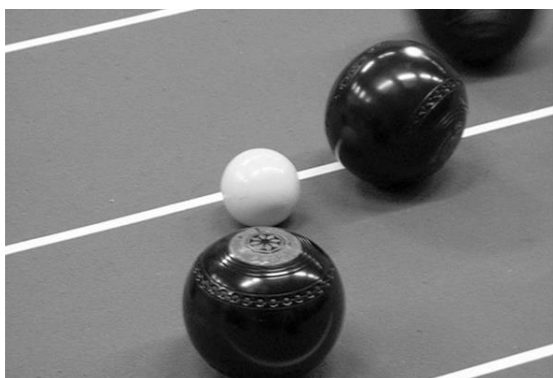
The **u3a** Handbell Ringers Group has been busy during November and December with performances to a wide variety of audiences, playing both secular and Christmas music. We have had one new member this year and are always looking for more. Being able to read music is not a necessity but it does speed up the time taken to learn how to ring the tunes.



We are a very friendly group and would love to see you at Countesthorpe Methodist Chapel on a Wednesday afternoon. The ability to laugh at and with us is a help.

CARPET BOWLS

Barry Hillyard on 277 4187



We now number a regular group of 8 to 10 members, meeting in the Countesthorpe Scout Hut. We run with two teams of players, chosen each week at random, so there is no ongoing rivalry. There is a lot of friendly banter between the two teams each week.

There is plenty of room for more members - if needed we can get a second carpet out and run two groups at a time.

It is a time for fun - no initial skill needed - when I started in the group 17 years ago I had never bowled before!



This is just a flavour of what's on offer! Why not start the New Year by trying something new? There is no commitment to continue if you find that a group isn't for you, but if you don't try, you won't know what you might be missing!

MONTHLY MEETING DETAILS

Always held on the **SECOND Tuesday** of the month
at Countesthorpe Village Hall

Doors open 1.30 pm; speaker at 2.00 pm followed by refreshments

Date	Title of Talk	Speaker
14 Jan	CRASAC (<i>Support for anyone victim of sexual abuse</i>)	Natalie Thompson
11 Feb	Carry On Films	Steve Dimmer
11 Mar	Polish Resettlement Camp – <i>Husbands Bosworth/Sulby. Disused Airfield 1948-58</i>	Bozena Juncewicz
9 April	Astride the Garden Fence	Fern Nursery
13 May	AGM	
10 June	Dementia Friendly	David Hebblewhite

YOUR u3a COMMITTEE 2024-25

Chairman:	David Hebblewhite	07480 852233
Deputy Chair:	Barry Hillyard	277 4187
Secretary:	Janine Tibbles	07970 648979
Treasurer:	David Hetterley	277 7703
Membership Secretary:	Barry Hillyard	277 4187
Information & Publicity:	June Norris	277 6330
Speaker Secretary:	Beryl Lishman	277 0405
Groups Co-ordinator:	June Norris	277 6330
Committee member:	Gill Brown	07757 007025
Committee member:	Jill Clayton	277 7154
Committee member:	Sue Howard	07799 757617
Committee member:	Dorothy Ivatt	07411 163396
Committee member:	David Norris	277 6330
Committee member:	Barbara Talbot	278 2821

NEXT NEWSLETTER

Our next Newsletter is due out in June 2025, and news from the Groups will be much appreciated, or short articles about holidays or indeed, anything **u3a!**

Copy deadline is 31 May 2025, please.

Contact: june.norris45@talktalk.net or 0116 277 6330