

MINUTES OF THE GROUP LEADERS' MEETING

20 October 2016

Small Lounge, Village Hall, Countesthorpe

Present: Tony Claricoates, Liz Lockwood-Jones, Barry Hillyard, David Wild, Sheila Holmes, Jill Clayton, Pat Quinn, Joan Burn, Ruth Westley, Glenys Catterall-Annal, Ursula Wild, June Hawkins, Michael Beardmore, Liz Stuart (for Patsy Paterson)

1 Apologies for Absence

Beryl Lishman, Mikki Wilde, Allen Donkin, Gail Appleby, Ian and Patsy Paterson, John Armstrong, Michael Thompson

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Copies were available for distribution. June requested an electronic copy for the website.

3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

4 Individual Group Finances

Ursula asked whether any groups were struggling financially. No groups appeared to be in this position, though the Fit for Life weekly fee had been increased to £4 to ensure costs were being covered. Ursula reminded the meeting that requests for capital items can be considered by the Committee, and a form is available for this purpose (*download from the website – archive/general and reference/April 2015*), or from Ursula). It is important that expenditure is not incurred before approval has been received.

5 Meeting Places Used by U3A

These were listed as the Village Hall (main hall and small lounge), the Methodist Church, the Scout Hut, Brook Court Residents' Lounge, the Axe and Square, and the College's Sports Hall, as well as members' homes. Other venues used on an occasional basis include the Cornerstone and Cherry Lane Garden Centre.

6 Amend the Unpaid Subscriptions List

A list of members who had failed to renew in 2016 was circulated. A number of members were identified who had died, moved or who only joined in order to participate in holidays. Group Leaders were asked to make a general announcement reminding members of their own group of the need to ensure they had paid their subscriptions. It is not policy to send out reminders, mainly due to cost implications. If anyone knows a person named on the list, it would be appreciated if a gentle reminder could be given.

7 News from the Groups

Birdwatching attracts a regular attendance of about 10 or a dozen, out of 30 named on the initial list. There is a good social aspect, and many of the trips include a meal as well. Members are becoming more knowledgeable and it would be useful to know of any non-U3A groups or more serious birdwatchers within/without the U3A in order to share expertise and ideas. The programme for Spring 2017 is in place, and new ideas are always welcomed.

Walking (CARE) is 'staggering along' (and that's before they visit the pub for lunch!). Reports and pictures on each month's walks are on the website. Planning is well underway for the 2017 programme, and new walkers are always warmly welcomed.

History has had a good year with a range of trips both local and further afield, and a successful 3-night break in the Ironbridge area. The Planning Meeting on 13 October set out a similarly varied programme for 2017, starting with 3 talks from Peter Liddle on the Anglo-Saxons. The 2017 break is to be in the Durham area.

Theatre visits have continued to use local and more distant venues, though two were cancelled due to low numbers. Interest has now recovered and visits to see *Relatively Speaking*, *The Nutcracker*, *Season's Greetings* and *The Red Shoes* are upcoming.

Creative Writing continues as usual, with a few members leaving and a few new ones joining. The latest possible new recruit is just 97 years young, which proves it's never too late to join this happy band of scribblers.

Flower Arranging is full, with 2 names on the waiting list. A Christmas lunch is planned.

Carpet Bowls remains strongly supported with a core of about 15-18 regular attendees.

Computing – a few sessions have been run to help with specific difficulties

Beginners' Photography has not run, as there has been no recent demand

Discussion group is fairly static and continues to deliberate without reaching conclusions, but with great enjoyment. If the group enlarges, a venue may be needed as it will outgrow members' homes.

Guitar players are static at about six or seven, and continue to strum away.

SWANS keep plodding along, with a few members leaving and a few joining. More or less the same walks are followed annually, which seems to work for everyone.

Nordic Walking is a small group of just two, and would welcome new members.

Solo Sunday Lunch is happy to regularly use Ullesthorpe Court. The group is currently closed, as up to 35 members have attended.

Fit for Life has raised the weekly cost to £4 to ensure viability. Karen, the instructor, says that the U3A group is one of her star classes!

Allotment Gardening has had a productive year after a slow start. However, of the present 5 members, 2 are leaving the area and a further 2 are doubtful of continuing as the effects of age are beginning to be an issue. Without new members, the group will close and the equipment will need to be found new homes. A further year's rental has been paid to allow time for the situation to be resolved.

Sci-Tech has slightly altered the way it operates as contributions were tending to fall to just one or two members. Now, letters of the alphabet are drawn from a hat by group members, and this defines the initial letter of the presentation and the order in which it will be given by the drawing member. A recent presentation on 'Anti-biotics' was mentioned as having been particularly good

Sign Language continues with just 4 members, and would welcome new ones. It was suggested that 'British' should be dropped from the group's name, as other sign languages were also covered.

Garden Appreciation has seen a successful year, and meets next month to plan forthcoming events and activities. It is planned to link with other U3A groups for visits in 2017 to ensure viability, with several already mooted, including one to Cambridge with the Literature Group combining the Pepys Library with the Botanical Gardens, and another linking with the History Group to the historic allotments at Hill Close in Warwick.

CHEWS, as a slimming group, is a bit of a misnomer! Its prime function now seems to be holding weight gain at bay – at which it is very successful. The group is very small, and new members would be welcomed.

Travel has had a busy six months, with successful trips to Northern Ireland and Wengen, as well as numerous day trips, including those to Ely, Eltham Palace, and a day at the races. Due to issues with the lack of liability insurance for U3A travel organisers when not using a recognised travel agent, it has been decided to suspend the trips to Wengen. Day trips (and also overnight trips organised by 'study groups' such as History) are unaffected, as these are covered by the U3A insurance included in the member capitation fee within the subscription.

Jazz Appreciation continues with 4 or 5 people meeting monthly, either at Malcolm's or Joan's homes. The aim was to try for visits to listen to live jazz, but the short notice given by event organisers has meant this has been very difficult to arrange.

Cryptic Crosswords is really a closed group, as it would be quite difficult to integrate a total beginner. Progress is being made, and the group soldiers on with increasing success in deciphering what might be a charade or an anagram! Being on the same 'wavelength' as the clue setter seems to help.

Pilates is enjoyable and successful, with the numbers attending increasing slightly. This tends to be a quiet group, as everyone is 'in the zone' concentrating on their own exercises which can be completed either on floor mats or using chairs, as appropriate.

Make Your Own Pork Pie is a new 'group' on offer, which will be promoted. This will be for a group of 3 people at a time, in the Group Leader's home, and the pie-making will take about 5 hours to complete. Details will be circulated.

8 Any Other Business

David Wild reported that the recent Countesthorpe Community Event held at the College on 19 October had been very poorly attended, mainly due to lack of promotion and possibly also bad timing over the half-term and in the daytime as well.

There was no other business, and the meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

Date and time of next meeting: Thursday, 6 April (3 – 4 pm) in the Village Hall.