



CHAIRPERSON'S LETTER

Dear Friends

I last wrote a chairman's letter for the April/May Newsletter in 2014 – seven and a half years ago. What a lot has happened in the meanwhile.

There is, allegedly, an old Chinese curse: "May you live in interesting times!" These seven years have certainly been interesting.

2016 was the referendum on leaving the EU and we did so at the start of 2020 with lots of effects on our lives.

Then the pandemic - which had a much bigger and more immediate effect on all our lives and activities. The U3A more or less closed down apart from a few activities on-line. Thankfully, things are opening up again; most groups are back up and running, albeit with reduced numbers. Though that is changing as people become more confident.

Christmas is nearly upon us, and the traditional events are happening again – Christmas lunches, Carol Concerts, visits to the theatre particularly Pantomime (made more Christmassy as a whole family occasion.)

On behalf of the committee I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year (and perhaps a duller 2022?)

Barry Hillyard
Chairman
(Tel: 0115 277 4187)



THE 'KYNREN HOLIDAY' – A REPORT

Thursday 12th August – a lovely summer's day when 31 intrepid travellers, suitcases beautifully packed, set off 'up North' without a phrasebook between us. Our first scheduled visit was for lunch at a National Trust cafe. There was outdoor eating in the cafe's walled garden if you so wished, a decision Jill regretted as she seemed to be a wasp magnet, at least it kept them off everyone else. Thanks Jill, what a good group leader! A look round Beningbrough Hall and gardens was thrown in. The hall was a beautiful early 18th century baroque building with grand cantilevered stairs and central corridors running the full length of the house. Wonderful Italian inspired architecture but devoid of any furnishings, all sold for death duties in 1958, as was the house, but now used as galleries and exhibitions in conjunction with the British Council. We loved the small, but perfectly formed, Lowry seascape, rather lost in the vast rooms, so I kindly offered to re-home it in my lounge. They said they'd keep it in mind, but I realised later that they didn't ask for my address. Oh well! The knowledgeable guides had numerous stories about the hall's history, including the tale that when the RAF moved in during World War 2, you could get a free pint if you ran from the bar, the length of the house, up the stairs to the top floor, the length of the house again to the far stairs and back down those to the bar in under a minute. Apparently, not only a bicycle was once used but also a motorbike! The lovely formal gardens with beautiful butterfly magnet borders and views of the extensive grounds were ideal for a stroll or a seat in the sunshine before we travelled on to our hotel, Jury's Inn, Middlesbrough. A little confusion at dinner, my husband Mike was deemed to be a single guest, as was Pete Harvey, and they'd been given a table for two. Chris Harvey and I were quite happy to have a meal together, but thought the chaps might enjoy their freedom far too much, so it was soon sorted!

Friday 13th August – an overcast but warm morning as Jeff, our driver, checked his eyesight (à la Dominic Cummings) as we drove to Barnard Castle, a picturesque old market town, complete with a trailer of sheep negotiating the main road, and loads of individual shops and cafes for lunch. We were in good company, according to the numerous blue plaques detailing past visitors, including Walter Scott, Wordsworth, Turner and Dickens (researching Nicholas Nickleby). Visits could be made to view the buttercross, the 900 year old St Mary's church with its connections to Richard III and the remains of the castle. The sunny afternoon was spent at Preston Park Museum and Grounds. We all considered swinging through the trees at the adventure playground and the skateboarding park was hard to resist,

but Sue Wyllie firmly shepherded us all to the Georgian gentleman's residence. (Spoilsport!) A myriad of shops in the open air replica of an 1895 Victorian street leading from the rear of the house gave rise to many memories of articles our grannies had used, some of which some of us still did! Luckily the cakes in the tea rooms were fresh! The Victorian walled garden was well worth the stroll, not only for the flowers but for the magnificent vegetables. Back to the hotel for rest and recuperation or a U3A pool experience before dinner. Those water-babies among us all managed many, many lengths of the pool - honest! Just don't ask how long the pool was! Jill's idea for the evening's entertainment was to shove the isolated tables together (and boy, were they heavy) to be more sociable, in some cases not too close, in case we changed our minds!

Saturday 14th August – another dry, warm day and most of us elected to visit Durham with Jill, (she can't be trusted not to run amok on her own). Others chose to do their own thing locally and pace themselves ready for tonight's Kynren show. Loads to choose from in Durham, 600 listed buildings apparently, compact old centre and a fascinating indoor market. The magnificent Norman Cathedral proved popular and was a good spot for lunch. After an early dinner at our hotel, we set off to Bishop Auckland for the highlight of our holiday and were prepared to be dazzled, and we weren't disappointed. It was very well organised by countless volunteers and on stage, a cast of more than four hundred actors (further volunteers), men, women and children, supported by a couple of bullocks, a pair of goats, several well trained grey horses, a couple of dozen or so beautifully behaved geese and a flock of sheep. Various highlights of our island's past were enacted in front of a restricted crowd of 4,000. We followed a boy called Arthur as he negotiated his way through legends and history, meeting Joseph of Arimathea, St. Cuthbert, Boudicca battling the Romans, King Arthur and his knights, Saxons, Vikings, Normans, all making full use of the lawns in front of us, leading to the water beyond and the hilly area on the other side of that lake. Buildings magically rose from the ground, water spouts shot into the air, battles scenes included blazing arrows, a horse and rider alight. Then onto the Tudors, Elizabeth in her royal barge accompanied by Shakespeare and fireworks, Charles 1, Victoria, the industrial revolution, explosions and the worst mining disaster in Northumberland, more pyrotechnics for the first world war (which included the famous 1914 Christmas day football match), votes for women, and the coronation of our Queen, firework finale. I've probably missed bits out, so much to see and remember. It was thrilling, exhilarating and quite exhausting watching it all. An evening not to be forgotten.

Sunday, August 15th – and a trip to Beamish Open Air Museum for those who wanted to go. It was a grey day, still warm, and we had a few

showers, the vintage open topped bus, amongst the many circling the 350 acre site, was the one to avoid! Luckily there were plenty of indoor areas to explore in the 1900's pit village with school and chapel, or the town with masonic hall, bank, solicitors and shops, to name but a few, I avoided the dentist. We couldn't see it all and luckily it stayed fine for an outdoor picnic lunch. Mike and I have been three times now and still have never made it to the 1940's farm. The completion of the 1950's town could warrant another visit.

Monday 16th August – after chucking everything back in our suitcases we were homeward bound this sunny morning, via a visit to an English Heritage cafe this time for lunch on the terrace, no wasps in sight, but Jill ate indoors, just in case. Bolsover Castle was thrown in for sightseeing. Always seen it from the M1, dominating the surrounding countryside, and had meant to visit and was glad I finally made it, although our U3A had been several years ago, apparently. The present castle was built in the early to mid-17th century to reflect the Cavendish family's wealth and status. The main building is now a magnificent ruin commanding stunning views of Derbyshire from its terrace and walls. The intact 'Little Castle', a purpose built tower for entertaining, giving a taste of the gilded panelling, wall and ceiling paintings and ornamental fireplaces of the time, while the complete stable range with its indoor riding school (built by William Cavendish, a famous horse breeder and trainer) had displays about the castle's history. A lovely place to conclude our holiday. The five days, although they had flown by, had at times seemed much longer, as we'd packed so much in, but each venue visited could be done to suit your own pace and interests, a programme to suit everybody and a joy to be with so many U3A friends once more. Finally, many thanks to Jill and Sue for all their hard work and planning which made the holiday such a success. Where to next?

Report by Tricia Brown

COVID19 PANDEMIC REQUIREMENTS

At the time of writing, the wearing of masks at indoor venues, including theatres and community areas has become mandatory once again. Therefore we would like to remind you to bring and wear your mask at u3a meetings (unless you are exempt). Also, if you plan to go on any outings or theatre visits, please be aware that you MAY be asked for a COVID Passport! For details, please use the NHS app, or visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/get-digital-covid-pass> or call 119 if you do not use the internet.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**This will be in the Village Hall, Countesthorpe
on 10 May 2022 commencing at 2 pm
followed by a speaker or entertainment**

A G E N D A

1. Approval and Acceptance of 2021 AGM Minutes
2. Chairman's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Adoption of Accounts
5. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2022
6. Election of Executive Committee



CLARIFICATION OF OUR 'MEMBERSHIP YEAR'

Our membership year runs from 1 April until 31 March the following year. If any new member joins after our two 'renewal opportunity' meetings in April and May, they still pay the full amount, but their full or associate membership runs only until following 31 March. So, even if somebody joins, say, in November or January, they will still pay the full annual fee (it's currently only £15, after all!) and will be required to renew after 1 April alongside existing members.

This may seem a little hard on anyone joining late in 'our year' but we still have to pay the annual expenses, eg: capitation to the Third Age Trust.

We hope that this helps to explain and clarify the situation.

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 277 6330 or by email at jhawkins45@talktalk.net

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

As the pandemic restrictions have loosened their grip on our usual routines, many groups have begun to get 'back to normal' – though sometimes with reduced numbers as confidence in social gatherings is still not at the pre-pandemic levels. But, each group has found a way to meet safely, and adhere to the requirements of the various risk assessments called for by the venues that we use. Sincere thanks must go to the Group Leaders who have been so helpful in complying with the various requirements and thereby contributed to the safety of all members who have attended.

During the pandemic, we have seen changes to a few of our groups. Sheila Holmes has relinquished the Solo Sunday Lunch group, which has been taken over by Carol Kenneth and Hilary Natzel. David Wild has taken over from Mike Thompson at Scitech; Carol Kenneth has also taken over from Shirley Frost at Scrabble; and Janine Tibbles and Gill Brown have taken over from me in running the Theatre Group. Garden Appreciation is not currently running, as we have no replacement for Ruth Westley; Pilates is currently suspended – awaiting more members, and we are also looking to restart the Photography group with a new leader. Guitar is also not playing at the moment. Thanks to all outgoing Group Leaders for their work over the years.

News from the Groups is a little 'thin' this time, as we have not been in a position to hold a Group Leaders' meeting for many months. It is hoped to remedy this fairly early in the New Year. However, all Group Leaders have kept in touch with me, as Groups Co-ordinator and Information Officer, to ensure that all our members have timely and accurate information. So, another 'thank you' goes to all of you who lead our Groups. You are so much appreciated!

*June Hawkins
Groups Co-ordinator*

BIRDWATCHING

Janet Easey on 277 2544

The Birdwatching Group retains a stable membership of 20-24. Members enjoyed their Christmas Social early in December in the small lounge at the village hall. The group has already planned out a full twelve months of future visits, so everyone will have lots to look forward to, including outings to Draycote Water, Brandon Marsh, Rutland Water, Burbage Common, the Attenborough Nature Reserve, Rushton Lakes and Welney WWT.

THEATRE

Janine Tibbles on 07970648979 or Gill Brown on 07757 007025

We are very pleased to say that this group has now restarted under the joint leadership of Janine Tibbles and Gill Brown. They have been working hard to get a new programme together, and this starts off with the Christmas show "Chorus Line" at Curve. January sees a visit to the Hinckley Concordia for the pantomime "Goldilocks", followed in February by "Porridge". A visit to the Birmingham Repertory theatre for the matinee performance of Michael Murpurgo's "Private Peaceful" (the author of the fabulous War Horse) is on in April, and in June we return to Curve for a performance of "Cluedo" – based on the popular board game. Don't delay – book today! *(Please be aware of government guidelines regarding masks and/or COVID passports which may be in force at the time of each show!)*

WALKING (CARE)

Allen Donkin on 277 3665

The stalwart members of our most 'serious' walking group brave the elements on the last Thursday of the month, departing from the Village Hall at either 9.15 or 9.30 am – depending on the actual walk – and travel to the start in shared cars. We take turns to lead walks, and each one ends up at a local hostelry, where an optional pub lunch is enjoyed. Reports and pictures of our latest 6 walks appear on the website – Activity Groups section.

HANDBELL RINGING

Pat Hillyard on 277 4187

The Handbell ringers took advantage of the summer weather to meet up in Pat's garden, before returning to the Methodist Church schoolroom as autumn approached. They have also met in the lounge at Mulberry Court, and at another member's home. Carols are the current order of play, of course, but normal service will resume in the New Year.

SCRABBLE

Carol Kenneth on 277 8999

Thanks must go to Shirley Frost who led this group for a number of years before needing to step down recently. Carol Kenneth has taken on the role of Group Leader now, so thanks to her also. Why not go along and enjoy Scrabble, Rummikub or Upwords in friendly company on the first Wednesday of the month from 2 pm at Brook Court Residents' Lounge.

SOLO SUNDAY LUNCH

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

After many years of organizing the SOLO lunches, Sheila Holmes has passed leadership of the group to Hilary Natzel and Carol Kenneth. Some new venues including Badger's Mount and VIETA have been tried out, and numbers are beginning to rebuild after the gap caused by the pandemic

HOLIDAYS

Jill Clayton on 277 7154

This year saw a very successful August visit to Durham, where the Kynren spectacular was the highlight of the holiday. Tricia Brown has written an entertaining account of the holiday earlier in this newsletter. There is another visit to Weston-Super-Mare planned for February 2022. At the time of writing, this is fully subscribed, but Jill is always willing to take names for a waiting list in case of last minute cancellations.

SILVER STROLLERS

Pamela Runacres on 277 2653

This is our newest group, and is a response to the need for people to have a shorter, and more gentle-paced walk even than SWANS. The walks are usually fairly local, using decent paths and parks. They always culminate in a friendly chat over a cup of coffee/tea/hot chocolate – whichever you like best!

OUTINGS

David Hebblewhite on 479 0945

Unfortunately due to a series of circumstances, there have been no outings for some time. However, we do now have David Hebblewhite at the helm of this group, who has received an offer of help from David Hargreaves. So, watch out for some outings to be offered in the New Year.

HISTORY

June Hawkins on 277 6330

Our programme restarted with a much-postponed visit to Grimsthorpe Hall, which was most enjoyable. We are now in the midst of our winter schedule of fascinating talks from Peter Liddle – the former County Archaeologist. Over a period of many years of talks, we have gradually moved from an introduction to local archaeology, on to the earliest times through the Romans, Saxons, Tudors, etc to the Stuarts and the Civil War! Peter's final talk this series will cover Big Houses and Gardens during the Civil War period. In February we have an extra talk, by one of our members, Stewart Fergusson, on our neighbouring city of Coventry. This will be followed up later in the year with a visit to explore the history of this city. In March we are visiting the Museum of Brands in Notting Hill – another postponed destination – to explore 200 years of social change, culture and lifestyle. In April there will be an outing to Bury St Edmunds – a very pleasant town with lots to explore at your leisure. A full programme of visits follows throughout the summer – check out What's On and the website for details. Thanks once again to all those who have helped to organise and lead outings, and assisted at talks and with bookings this year. It is truly a team effort which keeps us all interested, entertained and informed!

LITERATURE

Mikki Wilde on 277 5509

We continue to enjoy a wide range of books – our latest one being “The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane” by Lisa See, which is a marked contrast to the previous one by Peter May “The Blackhouse”. Variety is the spice of life! Our six most recent choices and a brief summary of our discussions are all to be found in the Activity Groups section of the website. We would happily welcome new members, who would bring an even greater breadth of ideas for our future reading. Group leadership rotates every six months, so is not onerous! Mikki will hand over in the Spring to her successor who is next alphabetically!

CREATIVE WRITING

Mikki Wilde on 277 5509

We all became lazy during the pandemic! It has been a supreme effort to get back into the creative writing habit. Obviously our ‘muses’ have gone into hibernation! But, we are persevering and enjoy meeting up to find out each other's unique interpretation of our monthly theme! Why not come along and join us – you do not have to be an author – just have an interest in the written word, and a willingness to share your writing with a friendly and supportive group.

LINE DANCING

Maud Greasley on 277 1946



After a morning of festive line dancing, 21 members enjoyed their Christmas lunch at the Bull's Head in Countesthorpe. They are now taking a rest until 7 January, when they will hopefully begin to work off the extra festive inches with their usual hour of dancing. Every Friday in the Village Hall between 11.30 am and 12.30 pm. You are welcome to come along!

SWANS

Pauline Woodward on 07936 555048

Our programme of Short Walks and No Stiles continues throughout the winter, so long as there is no snow – when we do cry off, or just meet up for a coffee instead! In the poorer weather we walk in the City, exploring the non-muddy canal towpaths, New Walk, Castle Gardens, Victoria Park and the like. As the Spring approaches, we always take a walk from Wistow to Newton Harcourt to wonder at the dazzling carpet of snowdrops in the churchyard, before then going a little further afield to Market Harborough's Union Wharf and Thornton Reservoir (once the mud has dried up a little)! In April and May we have plans for the Abbey Park canal walk, Foston Locks and along the Grand Union from Kilby Bridge to Crow Mills. Why not join us!

CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2021

94 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:	Peter Bradbury
2nd Prize:	Margaret Cronin
3rd Prize:	Maureen Bostock

Save this date for our next Christmas Lunch: Friday, 2 December 2022

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 £7.

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.

KEEPING EVERYBODY INFORMED!

Our next Newsletter will be published in June 2022, and news from the Groups will be much appreciated, or short articles about holidays or outings or any new or proposed groups, etc.

Copy deadline is 29 May 2022, please.

In the meantime, our monthly printed "**What's On**" and the **website** will keep you all up-to-date with what is happening. Group Leaders can assist by letting me know of any events, visits, or changes to routine meeting patterns no later than the FIRST Tuesday of the month, to ensure inclusion in the next issue. Many thanks to all contributors this year!

*Contact me by email at: jhawkins45@talktalk.net or
call me on 277 6330*

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
11 Jan	Great American Songbook	Roger Browne
8 Feb	Woodland Trust	Ian Retson
8 Mar	Mountains and Midges - Walking the West Highland Way	Wendy Martin
12 Apr	365 Days of Colour in the Garden	Karen Gimson
10 May	AGM	
14 June	Leicester's Space rocket	Roger D Cooper

YOUR U3A COMMITTEE 2021-22

Chairman:	Barry Hillyard	277 4187
Deputy Chair:	David Hebblewhite	07480 852233
Secretary:	Janine Tibbles	07970 648979
Treasurer:	David Hetterley	277 7703
Membership Secretary:	Barry Hillyard	277 4187
Information & Publicity:	June Hawkins	277 6330
Speaker Secretary:	Beryl Lishman	277 0405
Groups Co-ordinator:	June Hawkins	277 6330
Committee member:	Gill Brown	275 2525
Committee member:	Jill Clayton	277 7154
Committee member:	Dorothy Ivatt	07411 163396

Full details of all our groups, events, trips and holidays can be found on the monthly **'What's On'** bulletin, provided at the monthly meetings with

copies in the Rainbow Shop and Library. Or, why not visit our website for listings of all that is happening, and full details of our various groups.

And don't forget the important **STOP PRESS** section of the **HOME PAGE** for important messages and the latest news!

www.countesthorpeu3a.co.uk

