

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

NORTHWEST REGION

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ACTING CHAIR'S MESSAGE



It is that time of year when many of our U3As have their Annual General Meetings. The same is true for the North West Region. Our AGM this year will be on Tuesday 29th May at The Friends Meeting House in Liverpool. I am delighted that two members our National Office will be there to talk to you. Liz Drury is responsible for Communications and Kevin Traynor for Finance. David Simmons will be offering advice on Data Protection (GDPR) legislation and our regional trustee, Gill Russell, will be explaining her role and that of the Third Age Trust. We also have two guest speakers. Professor Tim Greenshaw from the University of Liverpool will tell us about *The Non-Thermal Universe* and Dr Steve Barrett, also from the University of Liverpool will talk about the *Great Moon Hoax*.

You can register at the events page on our website.

<https://u3asites.org.uk/north-west>

There are still some places available at the Regional Summer School. If you are planning to attend, please book soon. Bookings before the end of May attract a £35 discount. Further details are available in this newsletter and on the website.

This week I attended the inaugural meeting of Wigan U3A. It was an excellent event. The room

was overflowing with attendees, over 100 of whom became members.

Have you ever used an App on your phone to help you with health, diet or fitness? More and more people are doing so every day. There is a choice of around 327,000 different Apps available, of which over 3,000 alone deal with dementia. Some of these are very helpful and some less so. Unfortunately, some are completely bogus. One App claims that if you put your thumb on the phone's screen it will tell you your blood pressure. It has 10 million users who rate the App with a score of 4.2 out of 5. And yet it is a complete hoax. Fortunately, there is now an organisation named ORCHA, which is part of the NHS, who can help. They have evaluated thousands of these Apps. They have given each App a rating to help you understand how effective, or otherwise, they are. I have met with ORCHA and they have offered to create a website for U3A members with details of recommended Apps. If you are interested in learning more or getting involved, please contact me.

Best wishes

Neil Stevenson

TRUSTEE NEWS AND TOPICS



Dear members,

How is your IT knowledge? How much do you use digital technology? How confident are you in using a digital device?

When I first joined the U3A I was on the steering committee and I remember how many of our members didn't want to use an email connection. Now, 10 years later, I know that many of them receive most of their information from our committee by email and the committee can't imagine it any other way!

In my current role for the NEC I am Chair of the Standing Committee for Education and was recently asked to look at options for developing and supporting on-line learning and it made me start to reflect on my own progress through the electronic and digital world, going back even further to my grandmother. I can remember how she was afraid of using the 'new' phone boxes with the A and B buttons, even more complicated when we had to start using STD codes. She would take me with her to show her what to do. (I was about 10. She was about 75). Later she refused to use a home telephone which had push buttons instead of a dial.

Move on many years, when I returned to full time teaching and was confronted by a BBC Master

computer in my classroom. Not long afterwards, home computers became popular in the form of the ZX Spectrum, and my son developed his life-long interest in digital technology.

Throughout the rest of my working life I had to learn to use computers and interactive white boards. I began to feel very confident until I received a new computer in my classroom and started to look for the power switch, which wasn't where the old one was. Imagine my red face when a six-year old pupil had to show me (because it was like the one he had at home).

The final straw was when my three year old grandson showed me how to use his daddy's I-Pad.

I now feel very confident in using a computer, mobile phone and my own I-Pad though I am by no means an expert, still don't understand techno-speak and still don't like social media. So I think I am now one of the many members in the same mind set. There are still a lot of our older members who don't have the confidence to use digital media and a lot of our younger members who have grown up with it and find it easy, but many like me who would like to expand their horizons.

Digital learning and support will develop over the next few years and will help our members to become more confident in their use of many aspects of IT. Meanwhile, I would be interested in your comments about your own progress and what you feel would be useful.

Gill Russell

NW Regional Trustee

TRUSTEE PRACTICAL TOPICS

NETWORKS – WHY BOTHER? They're just another level of bureaucracy

I can assure you a network is not another level of bureaucracy. Networks are not part of the Third Age Trust structure and are not another layer of governance. They have no authority or management control.

On the other hand, networking serves a useful purpose. It can provide a forum for discussion and an opportunity to exchange ideas, share good practice, organise study days and events, discuss problems and arrange inter-U3A activities. It can create a channel of communication between local groups and can help to develop and share resources.

Some have guidelines or constitutions and committees, others work on a rotation basis. Some meet only once a year, others two to four times. They are all different but they all have some common elements. They bring the local groups together. They try to follow and promote the objects of the U3A movement. They also provide opportunities for the Regional Trustee to meet representatives from around the Region.

There are now nine networks in the North West:

Deeside and Wirral	South Cheshire
North East Cheshire	
Greater Manchester	Mid Cheshire
Lancs-Mersyside	
Cumbria	Cluster group
Pennine Link	

You are under no obligation to belong to a network although if you don't, you are missing a great opportunity to expand your experience. Or you could belong to more than one network.

If your U3A is not part of a network, consider joining one or even forming a small neighbourhood group. Contact Gill if you want to discuss at gillian.russell@u3a.org.uk

NW REGIONAL COMMITTEE

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

REGIONAL CONFERENCE AND AGM Open to all North West Members. A great opportunity to meet people from around the Region.

Liverpool Quaker meeting House Tuesday May 29th. 10.30 – 16.00

We tried to book a venue further north as we especially liked the one in Preston which we used for the recent Best Ever AGM workshop. Unfortunately nothing was available on any of the dates we needed and as it was urgent that we finalised details, we have reverted to the Liverpool one which has proved popular in the past. This date will also avoid the transport difficulties when Lime Street station closes for refurbishment in June. Don't worry - Preston has already been provisionally booked for 2019!

Registration 10.30 – 11.00

Morning breakout sessions 11.00 – 12.30 will include:

Finance and the National Office: Kevin Traynor, National Finance Officer will talk about how your capitation fee is spent.

Communication: Liz Drury, National Communications Officer

Raising the U3A Profile, The Third Age Trust: Gill Russell, NW Regional Trustee. The work of the Trust, the NEC and National Office for the benefit of the members of the Trust (YOU!)

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): David Simmons, Wilmslow U3A. This becomes law in May 2018 so it's worth learning how it will affect us.

There will be two guest speakers in the afternoon:

The Non Thermal Universe – Professor Tim Greenshaw, (Liverpool University)

The Great Moon Hoax – Dr Steve Barrett (Liverpool University)

2.45 – 3.45 - **the Regional AGM**

Full details and booking forms are also available on the Regional website: www.u3asites.org.uk/north-west



U3A NORTH WEST REGIONAL

SUMMER SCHOOL 2018

**NEWTON RIGG
AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE,
NEAR PENRITH,
AUGUST 28TH – 31ST**

Full details of all the courses and booking arrangements are available on the Regional website at

<https://u3asites.org.uk/north-west>

Please note: all the tutors are U3A members who give their time freely to share their expertise and interest. If you ever feel you would like to run a course for the summer school please let the NWREC know.

Registration is now well under way for this event so book quickly to avoid disappointment. You can get a discount, for all who apply before May 31, 2018!

COURSE NAME	TUTOR
Ruskin and His Legacy	Meg Shaw
Architecture Housing, Modernism and Architecture	Clyde Raine
Archaeology What did the Romans ever do for us?	Maggy Simms
Lake District Minerals	Christine Arkwright
Modern Medicine	Gill Baynes
Recorder Playing	Marlene Phillips
Science is for Everyone	Bob Roach
Making friends with Music	Jack Wood
The Wars of the Three Kingdoms and Two Generals	Brenda Cubbon
Twentieth Century Russia from Tsarism to Communism and then What?	Edward Towne

AROUND THE REGION/

RECENT EVENTS/REPORTS

Silver, Slaves and Settlements.

NW U3As visit the British Touring Exhibition 'The Vikings: Rediscover the legend' at Southport



A group of 32 members from several North West U3As made a study visit to this outstanding touring exhibition on 13th April 2018.

With financial help from the Regional Committee we were able to hire a lecture room at the Atkinson in Southport where the exhibition took place. The Atkinson allocated two knowledgeable staff members to give us an introductory tour with background information. We then convened to the lecture room where Dr. Clare Downham of the Department of Irish Studies, Liverpool University gave an excellent presentation entitled 'Early Viking settlement and identity in North West England'.

Clare's presentation led to members raising some incisive questions regarding social stratification at the time, ethnic identity of Viking raiders, evidence for Viking ships being hauled over land and how far across the globe did Vikings venture – to name but a few.

Each group member was given a re-entry ticket to the exhibition, and as they took it in at their own pace the discussion prompted by Clare's lecture continued. Where was all this silver mined? How useful would the Coppergate helmet be in a real fight?

One member explained that a recent DNA analysis has mysteriously shown traces of an Arabian haplogroup. The exhibition and lecture promoted speculation that a distant ancestor could have taken one of the Viking routes into Europe – willingly as a trader or a raider, or as enslaved.

We hope this event will be the first step in forming a regional Archaeology study group, both to feed members' interests and to support members in the work of their own U3As.

Maggy Simms (*Maggy is also leading a study group at the Regional Sumer School this year*)

Deeside and Wirral Network Science Day

Monday 30th April

Following an earlier successful event for Language groups, the Network Committee decided to devote a day to promote the interchange of ideas between Science groups. In addition to members from the Network, there were enthusiastic attendees from further afield, including Manchester, Anglesey, St. Helens and Southport. Fourteen U3As were represented with an interesting gender balance of almost 50-50.



Guest speaker Hannah Renshall, North West Outreach Officer for the Royal Institute of

Physics, gave a lively presentation on 'Bias gender in Science' and later a shorter one introducing people to science.

Between these, Mike Hollingsworth the National Subject Advisor for Science, helped structure discussion by small groups. He suggested some themes but there were opportunities to voice others as well. Later on, there was feedback on this group session'.

Participants enjoyed airing ideas with people who had faced similar issues elsewhere, and there were at least two people who were looking for a group to join – and found one! We hope that attendees will continue the linkage formed by this event in the future.

Arthur Maltby

Greater Manchester Network's University Challenge?



Teams from eleven of the 12 members of Greater Manchester Network met together on March 12th for an afternoon of quizzing. Questions were asked on a range of categories including Film & TV, History, Music, Geography, Science and Current affairs. Teams also had 20 faces of people associated with the Manchester Region to identify plus 20 anagrams of UK towns. All teams did well and the eventual result was quite close. The winning team was from Oldham U3A, closely followed by Bolton and High Lane U3As. The quiz was organised by Diane Saxon (High Lane), Anne Davies (Tameside) and Doreen Hawk (Bury). This was our first inter-U3A quiz and was deemed a great success.

Diane Sax

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



- Our Tennis group want to use facilities at a local club. Are they still a U3A group?

Technically, no you are not. If people have to join an external organisation in order to pursue their U3A interest, they are going outside the object of the U3A movement, which is to promote self-help, member to member learning, and it can bring the insurance into question. On the other hand, joining a club can provide members with experience which they could use to form their own group within their U3A. If the group is simply hiring the facilities without joining the club that does not present a problem and is covered by our insurance.

- Our Treasurer is threatening to resign because the new advice says he now has to book all the venues for our interest groups as well as pay for them.

No he does not. If a venue requires a contract, the committee must sign the contract and monitor the financial management. The person who books to venues is often a Trustee but can be someone authorised by the committee to handle the bookings. The interest groups can pay themselves and give the Treasurer a receipt so that there is a clear paper trail.

- Why is there so much paperwork coming out of National office?

Charities are bound by Charity Law. For many years, U3As were told they were autonomous. They wrongly took this to mean that they could do whatever they liked. Now they are told they are 'operationally Independent' which means they have management control but must comply with Charity Law. In recent years some charities have not followed correct procedures and as a result the Charity Commission has issued new

requirements. This means that the Trust and National Office need to ensure that our members understand the issues around compliance.

- Why don't we have a Head Office?

Each U3A is an independent charity under the umbrella of the Third Age Trust. Each U3A signs an agreement to abide by the objects of the U3A movement and the committees are responsible for ensuring that their members understand those objects. There is no central U3A and we are not branches, so there is no need for a central management. The Third Age Trust and the National Office work together to offer guidance and support to help U3As to understand their charitable obligations.

THE LAST WORD (for now!)

How much do you do for your U3A?

I often get committee members telling me that many of their members expect to be given everything but they don't give anything back. They will join interest groups or attend monthly meetings but they don't see why they should do anything else. Their excuse is often that they are retired and don't want to have a new job. The committee members become concerned that their organisation is stagnating because no one will take an active role in organising interest groups and activities.

I was at a meeting recently where I heard the following analogy.

A U3A is like a bank. If you continue to take something out of the account it will eventually diminish or even become defunct. You need to put something back in the account to keep it open.



POORLY PIGGY ACCOUNT ??

POORLY U3A ??