

Nottinghamshire Network of u3as

APRIL 2025

MESSAGE FROM CHRIS NIVEN, CHAIR OF THE NOTTS NETWORK

Dear Members,

At last, we have some sunny weather which certainly lifts the spirits.

As a committee we have been busy looking at the suggestions that were put forward by our members at our October meeting. You were asked how you would like to see the Network developing. There has been lots to consider.

One request was that at the start of our Network meetings we should all introduce ourselves. We agreed this was a good idea especially for new attendees to get to know everyone. So, at our April meeting will all u3a reps please be ready to say "hi" and introduce themselves.

Another request was for workshops outside of the main meeting. In response we have organised a Nottinghamshire Network Workshop on Monday 23rd June which has been advertised widely.

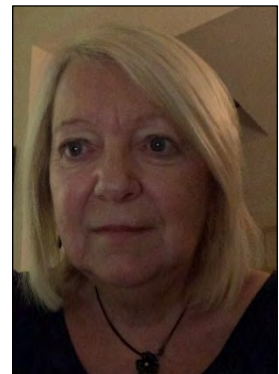
At our next meeting on 23rd April we have invited Sue Russell, Chair of Network Link and just appointed Chair of the Council to update us as you also asked for information on national developments.

Another suggestion was to look at how we promote ourselves. We had a very interesting and useful session presented by Paul Martinez and John Butler about how we make ourselves appealing to the next generation of u3a members. John also described how the Network Facebook page helps us reach out to this target audience.

We felt it was important to act on your suggestions as the Network belongs to all of us and we want to ensure that it continues to develop and thrive.

Have a very Happy Easter everyone

Best wishes
Chris Niven



NEWS FROM THE NOTTS NETWORK

Dear Members

INTEREST GROUPS MATTER – a free workshop for all members

I encourage you to join us for this morning workshop (full details on page 3).



It is the first time for many years that we are putting on a face to face meeting for our Notts Network members and will be a lovely opportunity to meet up and share thoughts together.

When you contact Margot to make your booking please let her know your particular interest as regards Interest Groups and we will ensure that we cater for all.

The break out groups will be suitable for members running or hoping to set up Interest Groups on subjects other than Music, Science and Technology and Walking. Discussions will cover many problems and solutions common to a range of Interest Groups.

It would also be helpful if some groups coordinators and group leaders who are experienced in setting up and running groups could attend as they will be a real asset to others who are new to the role

Rosie Allen
Network Support Officer

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

Nottinghamshire Network of u3as
[Nottinghamshire Network of u3as – Home \(weebly.com\)](http://www.nottinghamshire-network-of-u3as.weebly.com)

Nottinghamshire Network of u3as

INTEREST GROUPS MATTER

**Do you lead an interest group?
Would you like to lead/convene/facilitate a group?
Are you a groups co-ordinator?**

Find out more and join our exciting **FREE workshop on
Monday 23 June 2025
10 a.m. until 12.45 p.m.
at the Newstead Community Centre
Tilford Road, Newstead Village, NG15 0BS**



Programme:

- **Presentation on organising interest groups**
- **Break out groups**
 - **Music**
 - **Science & Technology**
 - **Walking**
 - **Group co-ordinators**

If you would like to join us please contact Margot Gale giving your full name, email address, your u3a and preferred break out group: margot.nottsnetwork@outlook.com

Learn, laugh, live

NEWS FROM THE EAST MIDLANDS REGION

Barry Appleby and John Lewis are the newly elected Council Representatives for the East Midlands Region following the amendments to the structure of the u3a movement at the AGM last October which were voted in by all u3as in the UK. We know John who transfers automatically to the new Council from his position as East Midlands Regional Trustee position on the Trust Board. If you would like to learn more about Barry please have a look on the Third Age Trust site here [u3a - Council Candidates](#)

We are pleased to receive a first report from Barry.

REPORT OF BARRY APPLEBY

March has been quite a busy month with me doing two trips to visit a couple of u3as in Lincoln. The first visit was to a u3a just outside the city. It was a good meeting. One member was a little concerned about insurance of speakers. We obtained advice from John Lewis who told us that external speakers should have their own insurance whilst u3a member speakers are covered by our insurance.

The second visit was to Belchford about a 30-minute drive out of the city. This was a very pleasant meeting with 10 members present from different areas around Lincoln, Boston, Spilsby, Lincoln Wolds, Horncastle, Louth and Skegness. I mentioned about them organising a network group but unfortunately my suggestion was turned down.



In the next week on 8th April all Council Representatives will be attending our first meeting in London. After that we will start our work.

Barry Appleby
East Midlands Council Representative

Ed. Members with concerns or questions about insurance can contact the u3a office for help.

RAINWORTH & DISTRICT u3a

The two new groups, Armchair Film Club and Local Luncheon Group have been very well supported.

We had an interesting speaker recently, John Bryan from Age UK speaking about Jessica's Law. It was a reminder to all of us to be very careful when receiving unsolicited mail, usually about winning lots of money, and phone calls when the caller wants immediate information, usually bank details.



We held a coffee morning that had been postponed last year due to bad weather. A well-stocked tombola stall did very well as did the raffle. It was also a special celebration for member Margaret Cheetham who turned 90 and which we celebrated with cake and chocolates. We had a musical quiz, prepared by Ian Hibbert and performed by The Ringtones. A support worker from Citizens Advice/ Cadent Partnership also visited and provided members, who wanted them, with free carbon monoxide monitors and gave help and advice on energy savings.



The Strollers have managed strolls around Rufford Park and Pleasley Country Park.

The local history group have had talks by Danielle Burton on how Napoleonic prisoners of war ended up in Chesterfield where 400 were billeted. It is not known if any of today's inhabitants are descended from them.



A talk by Andrew Tucker former Manager and Creative Director at Mansfield Palace Theatre on the history of the theatre was informative and enjoyable as it involved audience participation with rivalry between two sides of the room. Many knew the answers while some guesses were also correct. Gone are the days of it being one shilling in the gallery, two shillings in the pit and three shillings in a box!!

All other group activities are well supported and forthcoming events are showing lots of interest.

Jackie Massey

EASTWOOD & DISTRICT u3a

At our last two monthly meeting we have been making earrings from scratch; replacing earring fixings on old existing earrings; mending/replacing broken clasps on necklaces and stringing new bracelets.



We are starting to get to know each other and have a laugh and a coffee. It is a very supportive, lovely, friendly group of people enjoying being creative together.

Melanie Weston



EDWALTON GAMSTON & DISTRICT u3a

This year we have moved to sharing the role of walk leader. This enables people to go away on holiday and the monthly walks are still able to go ahead. It also spreads the load of organising and researching the walk. We have a walk once a month of around five miles. We walk in a variety of different locations. Some remain in and around Nottingham, but others see us travel a little further afield.

For our March walk we did a five-mile circuit in fine weather from Hickling basin walking through Kinoulton and the avenue of Lombardy poplars commemorating the loss of 184 soldiers of the Sherwood Foresters in the 1916 battle of the Somme. We had a good turnout of 18 people and two dogs. It was a good opportunity to catch up with old friends and welcome new members who have recently joined our u3a.

At the end of the walk, we finished with refreshments at the Old Wharf Tea Rooms overlooking the ducks in the Hickling basin. It was great to see so many people chatting away in the tea rooms and enjoying the wide variety of food and drinks available.



Martin Holden
Treasurer

WOLLATON u3a

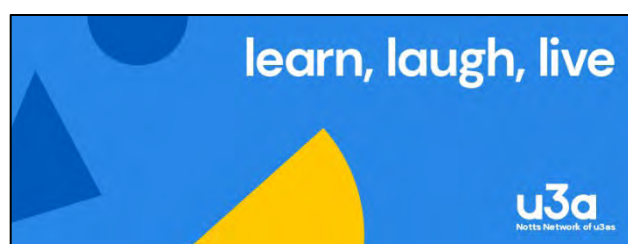
Dog Walking Group

Wollaton u3a started a Dog Walking group in 2024. We meet once a month to walk across the Bramcote Hills with our dogs who all get on very well together.

We decided early on that we will walk with a maximum of six dogs, but we rarely have that number join us. It's a very enjoyable way for owners and dogs to socialise.

The dogs in the photo are not our dogs, but some other dogs and owners who we met out walking. Our dogs never jump up!

Sarah Spilsbury



ASHFIELD u3a

Ashfield u3a members have been busy so far in 2025. One group took a walking holiday around Bournemouth and another travelled to Scotland. The walkers covered routes including Corfe Castle and Mudeford Beach Huts. *[You can read details of the trip to Scotland in Caroline's article on page 14].*

Two members of The Cave Rescue Organisation, told us about their involvement in the rescue of the young Thai football team who became stranded in Tham-Luang Cave in Northern Thailand in 2018, giving insight into the behind the scenes risks and huge international organisation involved in successfully bringing all 13 out alive with one unfortunate fatality among the rescuers.

The pie and pea supper was delicious.

The strollers group visited Gedling Country Park on a chilly March day.



The photo is taken at the Memorial to the 130 miners who lost their lives during the life of the Gedling Pit. It features several art works and the tunnel is built from mining rings that were used as tunnel supports.

To keep fit for all this activity some members practice Otago, a form of exercise which helps with balance and coordination along with general fitness.

Carole Seymour, who has run the card making group for 19 years decided it was time to hand over the organisational reins to someone else and she was presented with a thank you card, of course, flowers and a homemade cake which was enjoyed by group members with coffee. A huge thank you to Carole from all at Ashfield u3a.



We are looking forward to the rest of the year with more group activities, holidays, social events and outings planned.

Wendy Walker

STAPLEFORD & DISTRICT u3a

In March and April Stapleford u3a enjoyed two remarkable speakers, Peter Savage who challenged us with images of products and events of the 1960s, and young Emma Sheardown who, with support from family, friends, and physiotherapists overcame quadriplegic cerebral palsy to become a bronze, silver and gold medal winner in a stellar five years in the GB paralympic dressage team. In 2016, after family tragedy, the death of her horse and exclusion from the GB squad, Emma combatted depression by forging a new career. She wrote her first book, "No Such Word as Can't", honed her skill as a public speaker and advocate for the disabled, developing a training programme for businesses and customer service organisations. Now recognised as a motivating speaker, she is a respected adviser to industry.

Emma spoke without notes. She was truly inspiring and fully deserved the enthusiastic applause from a very thoughtful audience.

Our Interest Groups are flourishing. Among them, our Walking Group is expanding, as are the less energetic groups – Scrabble and Rummikub, Trivial Pursuit, a monthly Quiz, and an Art Group where unfamiliar media are explored. Our Treasurer, Janet Cross, recently entertained the Local History Group with stories of a dozen local celebrities from the 1700s to the end of the 20th century. Both our Book Club, and Family Historians led by genealogist Sharon Bosworth, use the excellent facilities at our local library. Intrepid walkers explore our county. Our singers would like more members, but the Ukulele Group regularly receives requests to perform at different venues and is so popular that a beginners' group has been formed. We are trialling a Jigsaw Swap.

Marion Edwards
Secretary

WORKSOP u3a

Our March monthly meeting took the form of a membership renewal day plus an Open Day. It brought together all 32 of our Interest Groups for the first time under one roof. Even our own members were amazed at the variety of activities we offer. Group Leaders demonstrated what happens in their groups and were kept busy with questions. Tea and coffee were available throughout the session. The atmosphere was tremendous, and we had over 80 visitors. We signed up 10 new members on the day, with more to follow.



We have musical groups, physical activity groups, cultural and social activities, and a wide range of hobbies and games. Our latest group caters for Golfers, experienced or beginners, and meets at Bondhay Golf Club. Popular groups include the Travel Group, Lunch Club and Singing for Pleasure.

Once a month, we hold a Taster Session which offers a different activity and allows people to try out their ideas with a view to forming new groups, or for one-off activities just for fun. We have had a go at juggling, archery, country dancing, fabric printing, needle felting and British Sign Language, amongst many others.

Sheila Massey

MANSFIELD u3a

Around the World International Cuisine – Refined Dining West Notts College

Once again, the young students at West Notts College did themselves very proud with excellent service and impeccable International Cuisine. Twenty-four of our Mansfield u3a international diners enjoyed a three-course feast fit for royalty, a lovely evening amongst great friends.



Regularly taking the top spot on TripAdvisor as one of the best places to dine in Mansfield, and offers customers the opportunity to enjoy a taste of fine dining during the week. Many thanks once again to Irena Dubowski and the Social Committee team for arranging these wonderful dining experiences.

Mansfield u3a Members Meeting

Geoff Harris – toastmaster and public speaker on the subject of: A Most Bizarre History of British Eccentricities. A very enthusiastic speech on the history of British eccentricities. Once again Geoff didn't disappoint, with gusto and aplomb he had the Mansfield u3a members in his hand with his entertaining talk. Always a pleasure to have Geoff back, he never disappoints.

Many thanks to Philip Tucker for once again arranging this wonderful talk.

Today saw our Groups Co-ordinator Stella Hall retiring from her post after her sterling work in bringing so much enthusiasm and effort into getting our groups moving forward. Our Chair, Elaine Huckerby seen here presenting Stella with a bouquet of flowers on behalf of everyone. Linda Kennedy has kindly agreed to take on the role in the interim until it can be approved at the next AGM.



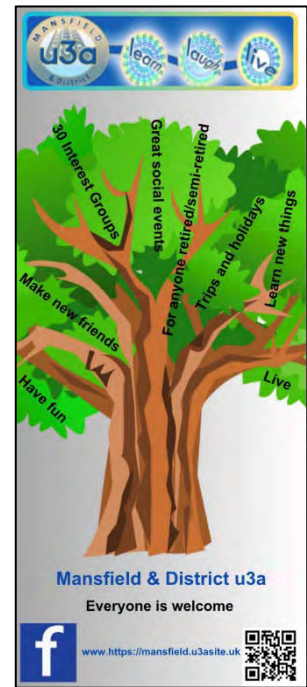


Garden Group

Karen Gimson provided members with an interesting talk focussing on bulbs, corms and tubers. Karen also made hand-tied bouquets and posies, which were raffled off to the members.

Our new Banner

Hopefully this eye-catching new banner will help us to publicise our u3a and all the benefits it can bring to anyone who joins in with all the activities and events.



Bill and Carole Harrison
Publicity Officers

RAVENSHEAD u3a

With spring in the air, it's been a time of both growth and renewal for Ravenshead u3a. Two months after we started our new 2025 Membership year, over 93% of our 2024 members had already renewed.

We celebrated the formation of a new interest group, Arts Appreciation. In early March, new Group Leader, Sharan Jones, spoke to a packed room at the Centre at St Peter's for the group's first meeting.

The inaugural session mainly focussed on local art and artists. It commenced with a presentation about the 'Cave Art of Cresswell Craggs' with its carvings on both shards of bone and the cave walls, to be followed by the life and internationally renowned work of Richard Parkes Bonington.



Bonington was born in Arnold, Nottingham, but he moved to France at the age of 14. Unfortunately, he passed away a couple of weeks before his 26th birthday, leaving only a comparatively small number of paintings to be enjoyed by future generations.

The meeting concluded with the history of the Nottingham School of Art and Design, which was very important to local manufacturers. The Nottingham School of Art opened its doors in 1843 and was the first government art school to be set up outside of London.



In February, our u3a Belly Dancing Group led by Sue Clipson danced at a "Hafla", a public event where dancers of all levels can perform for an audience.

Haflas can be a chance for students to showcase what they've learned in class, but can also be a social event where people can

dance together without worrying too much about choreography.

The event was to help raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Care, and the ladies were fabulous as usual, helping to raise a total of £385.

Sue Butler
Meetings Organiser

BINGHAM u3a

STEM Group Visit to Sherwood Planetarium Science Centre

We were not sure what to expect on a dull, drizzly, cold spring day when the group visited the recently-opened Sherwood Planetarium in Sutton-in-Ashfield. The Planetarium is built over a splendid, brick-lined Victorian underground reservoir which now contains an exhibition space with displays and space hardware.



We had thought we might be peering through a telescope, but were surprised to find comfortable, reclining seats under a vast dome. We were treated to an hour-long show, zooming among the planets and discovering worlds beyond Planet Earth, to explore the possibility of forms of life other than our own. The narrator explained in easily-understood terms what conditions would be needed for life to exist and where this might be found amongst the staggering number of universes out there.

Aliens would be far from being little green men (or women). The subject raised many unanswerable questions but the presentation was enthralling.

Discussion afterwards was lively, accompanied in the upstairs cafe by coffee and excellent chocolate brownies (!). We intend to visit again in the near future.

Dave Hobson

BEESTON u3a

Sir Martyn Poliakoff – April Speaker

Local resident and distinguished chemist, Professor Sir Martyn Poliakoff, delivered a talk about Mendeleev's invention of the Periodic Table – a gift to education.

Martyn was introduced by one of the Beeston u3a founders and distinguished chemist in his own right, Jim Turner, who has known Martyn since 1966 and was his PhD supervisor.

Martyn introduced Mendeleev's Periodic Table as a flexible framework for understanding chemistry. He showcased various periodic tables from his collection, including a Soviet stamp from 1969 and an Austrian classroom chart from 1886. Reflecting on his own education, he recalled his first school periodic table, which had gaps for elements yet to be discovered.

He noted that 17 new elements had been discovered during his own career. He pointed out that the five most abundant elements on Earth exist as gases in their natural state.

Martyn introduced a teaching aide he uses – a molecular model made out of squeaky dog toys, which was passed around the audience to great hilarity. He also recommended *The Periodic Table* by Primo Levi, praising the literary approach to chemistry. He noted that 2019 marked both the International Year of the Periodic Table and the centenary of Levi's birth.

Martyn's outreach efforts began in 2008, when he collaborated with video journalist Brady Harron to create educational videos about the periodic table. In just five weeks, they produced 120 videos, and the project has since grown to 730 videos with 291 million views and 1.62 million subscribers.

The discussion concluded with reflections on chemistry education. Some of his students became teachers, while his son now creates physics videos. He theorized



that making subjects compulsory versus voluntary influences student interest. He also discussed how chemistry education has become safer over time, though some of the excitement has diminished. Once-common classroom chemicals, such as benzene and carbon tetrachloride, are now banned due to their carcinogenic risks. He stressed the need to balance safety with maintaining curiosity and enthusiasm for science.



This report was largely written using our own experiment, conducted by Roger Coombes and Colin Portman, which involved feeding the Zoom output into Chat GPT. It was lightly edited by the human Karen Attwood.

Dee May
Communications Officer

DUKERIES u3a

On Saturday March 15th we held our annual Open Day, the purpose of which was to throw open the doors of Ollerton Jubilee Hall so that the general public could see for themselves what their local u3a had to offer.



Group leaders set out their wares and invited visitors to come and sample a whole range of different u3a activities from Bridge and Mahjong, to Creative Writing, to Rambling and playing the Ukulele – not necessarily at the same time! In the afternoon, a very well attended and lively concert, featuring our Banjolele group, Peaky Blinders, and the Jubilee Ukulele Band, went down an absolute storm. Many of the Peaky Blinders were in period costume and looked stunning. The audience too were in great voice, joining in the songs with gusto.

Elsewhere, Dukeries u3a members were royally entertained by a visit from the self-styled 'Baroness of Bolsover' to Ambleside. Her 'mission' was to teach us the finer points of taking Afternoon Tea in polite society so that we didn't disgrace ourselves in public, and we learnt such skills as to hold a cup of tea without unduly exposing our pinkies; how milk should be added AFTER the tea is poured, and why fresh tea

leaves – not the new-fangled abhorrent tea bags – must always be used. The accompanying Afternoon Tea was absolutely delicious, and the 'Baroness' had everybody laughing from the moment she entered the room. A most enjoyable time was had by all – and I am delighted to report that correct etiquette was observed at all times!

Mike Mounsey

JOINT u3a HOLIDAY

HIGHLAND HOUSE PARTY at the DUKE OF GORDON HOTEL, KINGUSSIE

I think I can speak for everyone when I say that members of Ashfield, Ravenshead, Arnold, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Rainworth and Hucknall u3as enjoyed a most marvellous five days up in the Highlands of Scotland at the end of February with Cairngorm Travel.

Our first day took us to Elean Donan, Elean meaning island, Donan, referring to Donan the 7th century hermit believed to have lived there. The castle, an iconic image of Scotland, was left in ruins during the Jacobite rebellion but was restored in the 1920s along with a bridge giving access to the mainland. The guided tour and talk were extremely informative and made this a memorable visit.

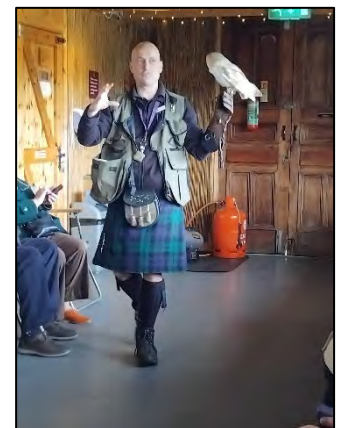


On our return to the hotel the scenery was stunning. Following the heavy snowfall the previous week, the melting waters ran in torrents down the mountainside giving a splendid show.



Our second day took us to the Red Deer Sanctuary where we had the opportunity to hand feed the deer. The safari rangers gave us a most interesting talk regarding the life span, habits and mating of these spectacular animals.

We also met Ossian the beautiful Barn Owl.



We enjoyed the fabulous drive back to the hotel from Inverness along the 23 miles of Loch Ness and past Urquhart Castle.

Our final day took us up to Ben Nevis where we boarded the gondolas with lots of squeals and shrieks as we bumped along up the mountain. Another sunny day afforded lots of selfies and photo opportunities. Alighting at the cafe we indulged in hot chocolate and coffee. The gondola ascends Aonach Mor providing views of the Great Glen and surrounding peaks. A very pleasant afternoon in Pitlochry, lots to see and do.

We spent our final evening at the Duke of Gordon where we were piped into dinner. An energetic Ceilidh and more than a wee dram of whisky completed our stay.

Caroline Rhoades
Ashfield u3a
Holiday organiser

AND FINALLY.....

As some of you know, I am standing down after 15 years of organising holidays for Ashfield and other u3as. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for having confidence in me to do my best and organise our holidays.

Bespoke travel to Croatia, Istria, Sorrento, Lake Garda, Taormina Sicily, Iceland, Vietnam and Cambodia, Ireland, Amsterdam, Paris, Turkey, Rome, Florence, Seville, Porec plus our many, many UK ALFA holidays and festive breaks

Turkey – Hisonarou

Who could forget our many holidays to Turkey, chartering a succession of gulets, meandering along the coast, mooring up in sheltered coves, languishing in the shade with a drink or two while crew prepared a scrumptious feast. The more adventurous, took a hair-raising ride to the top of Babadag mountain, 1.969 metres above sea level, then paraglided down through the clouds to the beach at Olou Deniz. Excursions to Ephesus, Pammukkale, and the temple at Side.

Spain

Arriving in the heat of Seville at a sweltering 39C, we visited the hilltop town of Ronda, marvelling at the Arab baths and spectacular gorge spanning the old and new town. In Cordoba the temperature reached a staggering 40C. The street flower festival was a riot of colour and scent, providing welcome shade in the heat.

Italy

We certainly packed some mileage in our two-week stay in San Agata in the hills overlooking Sorrento and Vesuvius. Taking the train from Sorrento, we visited Pompeii, Herculaneum, culminating in a final spectacular evening's entertainment set in the salon of a cliff top palace overlooking the sea. Two separate holidays to Rome and Florence saw members plodding for what seemed like miles over ancient cobbled streets, breathing in a heady aroma of sewage, pizzerias and traffic fumes, while admiring the sights.

Iceland 2016

Seven days in Reykjavik where I had negotiated a series of private day tours with

driver and guide. Early each morning Ziggy our guide and coach would be ready for us to navigate the wildness of the far north and its natural wonders. Every day was an adventure. On exiting the very well heated Blue Lagoon changing rooms, it was time to navigate a 20 yard walk outside in a -15 C temperature towards the steaming waters of the lagoon. Hilarious memories of watching each other, in swimwear, slipping and sliding down the walkway in a desperate attempt reach the heat of the waters!

Another memorable experience was standing in a melting glacier marvelling at the colours of the ice as it melted aqua, purple, green, just stunning. Who could forget little Budir church (iconic image of Iceland) standing in the midst of snow-covered mountains and glaciers.

Croatia – Pula, Cavtat and Dubrovnik

We loved Cavtat (had four stays there over the years). Again, we hired a local minibus and guide. Visiting war torn Mostar and the re-built iconic bridge. Making our way along the stunning Croatian coast stopping off at beautiful villages for lunch. Arriving in Kotor, Budva and Sveti Stefan in Montenegro. Multiple boat trips around the islands, frequent water taxis to Dubrovnik and walks around its ancient walls.

Wonderful food on our bespoke boat trips and seafood platters to die for in Budva. In Porec we hired minibuses and enjoyed fabulous days out into hillside villages trying out local food and vineyards. Unforgettable!

Paris

One unforgettable week in Paris many years ago. The spectacular sound and light show in Versailles. A champagne trip along the Seine. A hair raising tuk tuk ride from the Eiffel Tower back to our hotel, twice around the Arc de Triomphe on two wheels!!!

The Eurostar experience, where we were plied with so much wine that some of our party had difficulty disembarking!!

But above all, my abiding memories will be of coming down to breakfast each morning knowing I would be joining friends. Evening on a terrace somewhere watching the sun go down with lots of lovely and sometimes very naughty chit chat, watching u3a members making new friendships. These are memories I will treasure as time goes by. It's all been an absolute pleasure.

Caroline Rhoades

GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLES TO NEWSBITES

We will be particularly pleased to receive articles about any unusual or exceptional event that your u3a may have organised or any new activity that your u3a is running. u3as learn from each other and it is very useful for their members to read about new events or activities that they haven't come across before.

- Please send your text in Word format and keep to a maximum 300-word count.
- Please submit photos as separate attachments in formats JPG, JPEG, PNG or similar (not pdf). They must be of good quality and a minimum of 1MB. No collages please.
- Please ensure there are no copyright issues and that all who feature in your photos have expressed their consent for the photos to appear in Newsbites and on u3a and Network websites.
- Please let me have the name of the author of your article and his/her status e.g. member, group leader, chair etc. I do look on your websites but don't always manage to find a full name or status.

Many thanks

Maria Gabrielczyk – Editor

maria.newsbytes@gmail.com

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF NEWSBITES

Please send your articles (keep to a maximum 300-word count)
and good quality photos (as attachments please)
by 7th June 2025 to maria.newsbytes@gmail.com