

Nottinghamshire Network of u3as

OCTOBER 2025

MESSAGE FROM CHRIS NIVEN, CHAIR OF THE NOTTS NETWORK

Dear All,

Autumn is definitely with us with all the season brings. One of the things that is approaching is our AGM on 22nd October.

I will be standing down at the meeting but hopefully remaining on the committee in another role. I have had a wonderful experience as Chair and have certainly learnt a lot. As I am unable to attend the AGM I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee for all their hard work and commitment and for the support they have given me during my time in the role. We have a fantastic, thriving Network with lots of ideas for the future thanks to the team that steers the ship.

I wish the new Chair and committee well and look forward to the future.

Best wishes

Chris

At our recent officers' meeting, we discussed our much-loved Newsbites. It's great to see how popular it's become, though some feel it's getting a little long! To keep it snappy, please aim for 100–150 words and include one or two good photos. Don't worry about contributing every month — occasional pieces about something special are perfect. Your stories make Newsbites such an enjoyable and inspiring read across the Notts Network.

HUCKNALL & DISTRICT u3a

Our most recent excursion began aboard a beautifully restored 1946 vintage bus whose polished chrome and distinctive character instantly set the tone for the day. From Hucknall we travelled in style, enjoying the gentle hum of the old engine as we made our way through the countryside towards Wirksworth. In truth it was quite noisy, but fun.



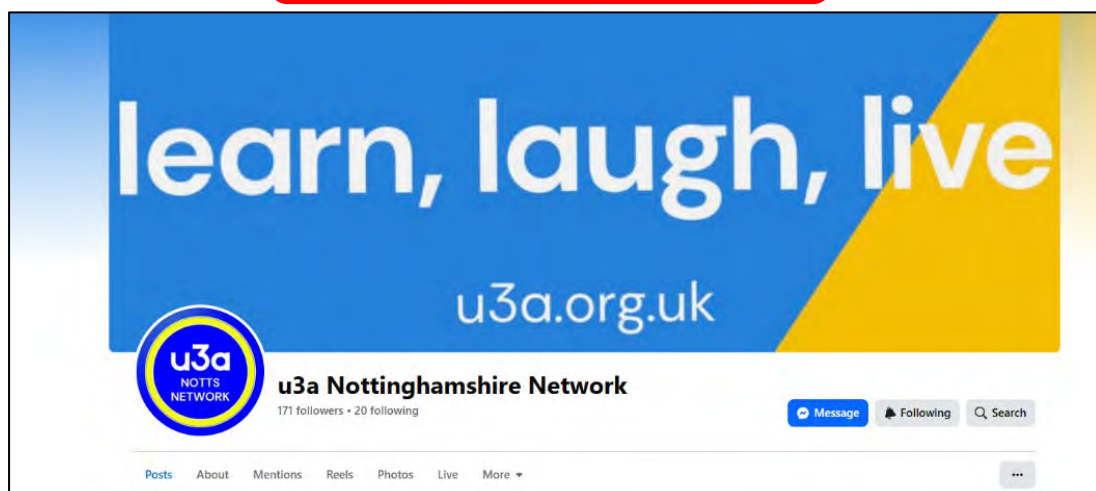
At Wirksworth we transferred to an atmospheric steam train, its plume of white smoke curling above the carriages as we boarded. The rhythmic chug of the locomotive and the whistle's call brought an air of nostalgia, transporting us back to a golden age of travel. The journey offered fine views across the Derbyshire hills, made all the more enjoyable by the leisurely pace.

We were treated to a hearty full English breakfast with eggs, bacon, sausages, beans, and toast. It was a satisfying highlight and provided the perfect opportunity to relax and chat while soaking in the traditional surroundings.

Re-boarding our vintage bus, we continued to the Crich Tramway Village. There we admired the heritage trams including a ride on the trams, an old-fashioned sweet shop, ice cream and a satisfying pint in the Red Lion pub before beginning our final leg homeward on 'Walter' our vintage bus. Returning to Hucknall in the 'comfort' of the 1946 bus completed a truly memorable day full of nostalgia, camaraderie, and timeless transport experiences.

Mark Thornley

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WORKSOP & DISTRICT u3a

Steelpantastic Dazzles at U3A Worksop Celebration Gig

In a blaze of colour, rhythm, and sheer joy, *Steelpantastic* lit up the Carlton-in-Lindrick Civic Centre at the Worksop and District Members' Meeting with a performance that was nothing short of spectacular. Formed in 2009 to promote the vibrant spirit of the Worksop branch of u3a, the band has journeyed through a rich musical landscape, and today's gig was a jubilant reflection of that legacy.

From the first shimmering notes of "Apache", the audience was swept into a soundscape that was unashamedly carnival. The steel pans sang with warmth and precision, each note a celebration of community, creativity, and the enduring power of music.

The setlist was a masterclass in variety and flair. "Something Stupid" brought a touch of nostalgic romance, while "Let It Be Me" offered a tender moment of reflection. Then came a surprise twist – Chopin's Etude – a classical gem reimagined with Caribbean sparkle, showcasing the band's musical dexterity and fearless innovation.



"Somewhere Over the Rainbow" soared with heartfelt emotion, its dreamy tones echoing the aspirations of the U3A community and the journey *Steelpantastic* has taken over the years.

But it was the encore that truly brought the house down. As the first notes of "Brazil" rang out, the Civic Centre erupted in applause. The rhythm was infectious, the energy electric. Feet tapped, hands clapped, and the room transformed into a carnival street party. It was a fitting finale to a performance that celebrated not just music, but the spirit of togetherness. *Steelpantastic's* gig was more than a concert; it was a testament to the joy of lifelong learning, the power of community, and the magic that happens when people come together to make music. The band's journey from its 2009 beginnings to today's triumph is a story worth celebrating.

Sheila Massey

Emilie Carter, Head of Costumes at Nottingham Playhouse since 2022, gave a lively and fascinating talk on how costumes are designed and created for stage productions. Drawing on recent Playhouse shows, she explained the process from design sketch to finished garment, highlighting the unique challenges of each production. For *Minority Report*, Disney forbade any resemblance to the Tom Cruise film, demanding a wholly original approach. In the comedy *Village Idiot*, actors were dressed as animals using recycled panto heads, while *Punch*, a Nottingham-based drama, required costumes approved by the real people portrayed.

Emilie's biggest annual challenge is the pantomime – her aim being "to make it look like someone has thrown a rainbow on stage."



She brought along examples, explaining how she adapts them for movement, rapid costume changes, and even the leading dame's post-surgery needs.

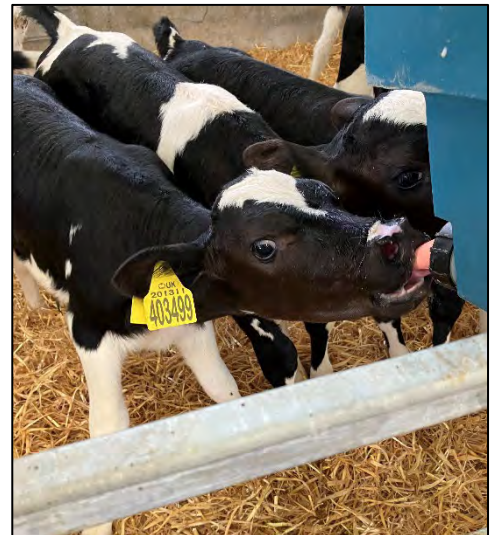
Emilie also discussed efforts to reduce environmental impact by sourcing costumes second-hand and sharing items with other theatres. The session ended with audience members enthusiastically trying on costumes she'd brought, as captured in the photos – a colourful close to an engaging and insightful presentation.



Dee May
Communications Officer

RAINWORTH & DISTRICT u3a

Rainworth u3a has been busy with a range of enjoyable activities. Members recently visited Gates Garden Centre near Oakham, followed by a fascinating tour of Farmer Barnes Dairy. Jane Barnes gave an informative and engaging talk about running a dairy farm, explaining where the milk goes and what it is made into. In their case, the milk is sent to Clawson Dairy to be made into Stilton cheese. The visit concluded with refreshments – naturally including cheese and biscuits featuring both Stilton and Shropshire Blue – and the opportunity to purchase cheese, which many took advantage of.



Other outings included garden and National Trust visits to Thornbridge Hall in Bakewell and Nunnington Hall near York. A day trip to Whitby was also well supported, and members were lucky to enjoy beautiful weather throughout.

Jackie Massey

SOUTHWELL u3a

HIDDEN DEPTHS!

Southwell u3a runs an annual programme of short courses and workshops, in addition to our usual interest group meetings. The courses (usually 2 or 3 sessions) and workshops (usually 2–3 hours) are mainly presented by our own members, displaying hidden talents and knowledge about everything under the sun!

If you have any such previously unrevealed expertise or any presentations that you've given to other audiences in the past, we'd be delighted to hear from you and hopefully include you in our programme.

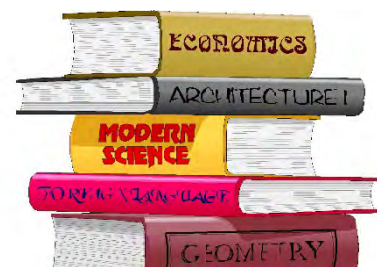
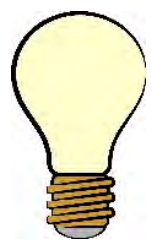


We can arrange venues, publicity and cover any costs associated with your short course or workshop – you would only need to give the presentation(s).

If you might be interested or require further details, please get in touch with me at:

groupscoordinatorsu3a@gmail.com

Brian Platts
Groups Co-Ordinator



CARLTON & GEDLING u3a

Walk Fit to Music

At Carlton and Gedling u3a, we discussed setting up a new exercise group called Walk to Music in the spring of 2025. This form of exercise combines aerobic and cardio movement at a walking pace, practised and then set to music for enjoyment. It is suitable for all fitness levels.

We originally had over 90 members of all ages and abilities showing an interest in this group, so had to set up four taster sessions to make sure everyone had a chance to try it. After these sessions we had about 65 who wanted to carry on, so we had to set up two groups which originally ran every two weeks.



Everyone attending felt that this was good for their mobility and they enjoyed the social side of the group. This was evident on a day where the usual instructors were unavailable, so the convenors made up their own moves along with the members to the songs. We still have over 40 members in the group, so have managed to run the sessions weekly now, for those who wish to come along.

Sandra Stanley
Interest Group Co-Ordinator

WOLLATON u3a

Wollaton u3a's Cinema and Theatre Group is very popular and regularly visits the independent Broadway cinema in Nottingham. Their next film is *I swear* the true story of a Tourette syndrome campaigner. They will then be off to see *Home, I'm Darling* at the Lace Market theatre – a comedy which takes a look at what is happening beneath the perfect domestic home life.



Once a month members meet in the pub to discuss the films and theatre productions they've seen over the past four weeks.

Sarah Spilsbury

ASHFIELD u3a

Ashfield u3a has been busy making the most of the last of the summer months while preparing for the colder and festive season ahead. Members of the Miscellany Group enjoyed visits to both Stamford and the Veolia Recycling Centre in Clipstone. The latter proved quite an eye-opener, with many discovering they had been putting the wrong items in their recycling bins. It was also fascinating to learn that around 30% of Nottinghamshire's general waste is incinerated to produce steam and energy for the National Grid.

The Strollers walking group explored Moor Pond Woods and Papplewick Dam Wood on a day that threatened rain but turned out to be perfect for walking. The route included a delightful detour to see the ancient yew tree in St James's churchyard, followed by refreshments – and a few samples from a particularly tasty damson tree along the way.



Wendy Walker

NEWARK & DISTRICT u3a

Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes

When we invited Nottinghamshire Blood Bikes to be our guest speakers at a recent meeting, many of us knew little, if anything, about them.

Phil & Jon explained how the charity's band of dedicated volunteers provide an out-of-hours transport service for their NHS partners, working through the night delivering vital items such as blood products, medication & surgical equipment.

Their inspirational presentation created great interest among our members, especially as Phil & Jon brought along not only one of their fleet's response cars, but a motorcycle too, which proved just too much of a temptation for Chairman Maggie to resist!



Maggie George
Chairman

EASTWOOD & DISTRICT u3a

Our showcase event held on Wednesday 4th October was a great success. More than 20 groups promoted their activities, making for a lively and well-attended occasions.



We welcomed new members who came along to explore the wide range of groups on offer, covering diverse subjects such as Photography, the Book Club, French Conversation, and Family History.



Fred and Clint were on hand to ensure everything ran smoothly. The Gardening Club had a table and successfully sold its produce, while a beautiful poppy display showcased the many poppies made by enthusiastic u3a members.

Thanks were given to everyone who contributed to the day — their efforts were much appreciated.

Anne Steel
Chair

RADCLIFFE ON TRENT u3a

We set off from Radcliffe at 8.30 a.m. and arrived at Salford Quays at 10.30 a.m. Many began their visit at The Lowry, home to the world's largest public collection of paintings and drawings by L.S. Lowry. There was also a special exhibition featuring the work of Quentin Blake, best known for illustrating Roald Dahl's books.



No museum tells the story of the Second World War better than the Imperial War Museum, and all our members visited to learn more about the causes and consequences of war. Many then enjoyed lunch at one of the numerous food outlets before exploring the shopping centre, which has 85 stores.



Salford Quays has undergone many transformations since the days when the Manchester Ship Canal opened up the inland docks to serve the Lancashire cotton trade. It proved to be a fascinating and worthwhile destination, thoroughly enjoyed by all our members.

George Roberts
Trips & Outings Group Leader

MANSFIELD u3a

Quiz Night out with Sherwood u3a

Six members of Mansfield u3a were entertained and well fed on the evening of Saturday 27 September. The Sherwood u3a Fish-n-Chip Supper and Quiz were enjoyed by all. The energy and enthusiasm of the organisers was contagious and there was plenty of laughter mixed with some head scratching and debating as we worked hard on the, sometimes quite challenging, questions. The fish and chips were excellent and piping hot.



Joint Calligraphy Group with Southwell u3a

Marilyn Jones and Tim Baker, collaborated with Southwell u3a to put on a Beginners' Calligraphy Workshop in Foundational Hand.



The workshop was hosted at the Group Leaders home and ran from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lunch provided. Marilyn led the Workshop and Tim, who is left-handed, coached one of the Southwell left-handed members.

Our next module will be on Gothic Hand, hopefully in a month or so.

Bill and Carole Harrison
Publicity Officers



ARNOLD u3a

This year we celebrate 15 years since the founding of Arnold u3a! We've planned a couple of events. The first one took place on 26 September where we booked a venue, brought food to share, and were entertained by Dice and Balls who helped us with several skills – Diablo (bobbin on a string), plate spinning, and balloon animals. As well as the food we brought to share, Dice and Balls brought a candy floss machine which proved rather popular!



Never ones to say “enough!” we’re having another event on 7th November, providing our own entertainment and celebrating committee members and group leaders. Hazel and Viv (oh, and ChatGPT) have written a song for the occasion, to the tune of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* and our Singing For Fun group will be leading all of us to sing this and a couple of others. It's quite a fun song, do feel free to adapt for your u3a if you want to do something similar.

1

Arnold u3a is here,
Bringing learning, fun, and cheer.
Fifteen years of laughs and friends,
Where the joy just never ends.
Try new things and have your say,
With our friends at u3a!

2

History, crafts, or singing songs,
Walks and talks — you can't go wrong!
Join a group or start your own,
You will never be alone.
Friendship, learning, cake, and tea —
What a lovely place to be!

3

So we sing and celebrate,
Fifteen years — we think that's great!
Here's to many more to come,
Filled with joy for everyone.
Arnold u3a, hooray!
Let's enjoy this special day!

Hazel Ward
Viv Purkiss

STAPLEFORD & DISTRICT u3a

At our Groups Fair on 3 September Anne Linsdell, Groups Co-ordinator, persuaded Group Leaders to describe their own Group. Several visitors have now joined, making our recruitment rate already encouragingly high.

Our photography guru, David Jones, sends used postage stamps to *Against Breast Cancer*, his last parcel raising £30. We would be delighted to pass Network members' stamps on to him.

The Gardening Group's future emphasis will be on local visits and practical subjects, with a Plant Swap in October.

Our Walkers tailor all their walks around public transport. A bus to Sawley Marina in September started a riverside stroll to Trent Lock, along the Erewash Canal to Long Eaton before returning to Stapleford. October's walk covered fields around Stapleford and through Bramcote village.



Quiz Group



Family History Group at Stapleford Library

Marion Edwards

DUKERIES u3a

I thought, this month, that we might be 'flies on the wall', and drop in on some of the activities that have been taking place, to give a flavour of the variety of u3a groups that operate here in the Ollerton area.

Barbara Baglee runs a very lively History Group. They very much enjoy discussion of historical topics, usually initiated by Group Members, and this month they were treated to a very entertaining history of Nottingham's Goose Fair by John Harris and Jean Parry-Williams.



The Banjoleers used to be known as The Cheeky Blinders. Under the new leadership of Phil Topley, their aim is, quite simply, to have a lot of fun and to play 'joyful songs'.

Bridge – facilitated by Georgina Batty – is one of our popular groups and welcomes everyone who would like to play one of the finest card games in a friendly and supportive atmosphere.

Jane Young runs our Sewing Bee. Sewing machines and basic sewing kits are always available, and knitters, crochet and needle workers of any kind are always welcome.

Mike Mounsey leads the Creative Writing group where the basic aim is to help and encourage people to express themselves in a range of writing modes with confidence. Currently, the group is practising how to write more persuasively using speeches by Winston Churchill and Earl Spencer as models.

The Ramblers, organised by Stephen and Kate Hall, recently enjoyed walks by the Retford Canal and, later, to Collingham where they were treated to the sight of the new 'Bomber County' Lancaster memorial at Norton Disney.

Mike Mounsey

RAVENSHEAD u3a

REFLECTIONS ON OUR 2025 u3a DAY



Our Open Day, held on Friday 26 September as part of u3a Week, was a thoroughly enjoyable and lively event. The venue buzzed with energy, thanks to the enthusiastic contributions of our members, group leaders, and committee members.



Visitors enjoying a lively game of Mölkky, the Finnish outdoor skittles game that combines skill and luck."



During the day, over 80 people attended, 18 new members signed up, and 91 members expressed an interest in joining specific groups. Visitors had the chance to explore a wide variety of activities and chat with participants, getting a real sense of the friendly, welcoming spirit that makes our u3a so special.



All in all, a very successful day!

John Butler
Chairman



DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF NEWSBITES

Please send your articles and good quality photos by 7 December 2025 to
maria.newsbytes@gmail.com

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 100–150 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