

MESSAGE FROM JOHN BUTLER, CHAIR OF THE NOTTS NETWORK

Dear Members

I'm thrilled to have been voted in as your new Chair at the AGM in October. I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Chris Niven, for her leadership over the last three years, and I'm delighted that she has chosen to remain on the Network Committee, serving as our Peer Support Group Co-ordinator.

As a passionate advocate for the benefits of u3a membership, and currently serving my third and final year as Chair of Ravenshead u3a, I have seen first-hand the support the Network offers to committee members across our local u3as.



My first appointment in this new role was attending Arnold u3a's 15th Anniversary Celebration, where I had the pleasure of presenting u3a pins to founder members and long-serving officers. Congratulations to Hazel Ward, her team, and all the members.

During my term of office, I hope to visit each of the 34 u3as in the county, as one of the great joys of u3a leadership is the friendships and working relationships that develop.

As we approach the festive season, I wish each and every one of you a happy Christmastime with friends and family, and a healthy, fulfilling 2026 engaged in the many opportunities your u3a offers.

John



NEWS FROM THE NOTTS NETWORK

Our new Chair, John Butler, Vice Chair, Maria Gabrielczyk and Network Support Officer Rosie Allen, attended the BBC Scam Safe Week TV Roadshow at Nottingham City Library on Friday 28 November.

The event featured a live outside broadcast into the BBC *Morning Live* show, with presenter and Consumer Affairs expert Rebecca Wilcox – daughter of Dame Esther Rantzen – interviewing many of the key exhibitors throughout the morning.

With fraudsters sadly becoming more active as the festive season approaches, the BBC Scam Safe Roadshow proved particularly timely. The aim of the event was clear: to equip visitors, and the organisations they represent, with practical, reliable advice to help them stay Scam Safe.

The roadshows are part of the wider BBC Scam Safe initiative, delivered in partnership with Stop Scams UK, National Trading Standards, UK Finance and The Open University.

Once the live broadcasts wrapped up, Rebecca Wilcox kindly agreed to speak with John Butler. The five-minute interview can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPRICZBYho>



Take 5

A central theme of the day was the *Take 5 to Stop Fraud* campaign. Its simple but powerful “Stop, Challenge, Protect” message was reinforced across BBC programming, online content and local radio – encouraging everyone to pause and think before responding to any request that could put them at risk.



CALLING ALL PETANQUE PLAYERS

Does your u3a have pétanque players? Pétanque — also known by some as boules — is a fantastic sport suitable for all abilities. If you can form a team of four to six players (or more, depending on interest), you could take part in a Network-wide competition next Spring or Summer.

The event would be held at Nottingham City Pétanque Club, which has plenty of space to host multiple games simultaneously. The club usually charges £3 per person for competitions like this.

If your u3a is interested, please get in touch at neilhunt200@gmail.com and we'll see if we can make this exciting opportunity happen.

Neil Hunt, Arnold u3a



MAPPERLEY & DISTRICT u3a

Recently MaD U3A enjoyed a fascinating tour of Bromley House Library – Originally Nottingham Subscription Library.

The building was constructed in 1752 for George Smith, of the Smiths' banking family.

Nottingham Subscription Library was founded in 1816. The initial 169 members bought one share each and paid an annual subscription. They purchased Bromley House in 1820 for £2,750. The spiral staircase was installed in 1857, has no central pillar and is self-supporting.

The Dark Room, used to be the servants' quarters. From 1841 to 1955 it served as a photographic and painting studio. Following the departure of the final tenant, it became a storage space for books, and a display of photographic equipment is now on show there.

The library's contents are spread across three floors in rooms named after notable members. The Standfast Room contains one of only four Meridian Lines, made of wood and brass in 1836. It was used to set clocks to local noon before GMT became the national standard. The grandfather clock is still set to "Nottingham time," 4 minutes and 33 seconds behind Greenwich.



Sheila Ward

BINGHAM u3a

BINGHAM U3A IS 25 YEARS OLD!!

Bingham u3a started their 25th anniversary celebrations with a dinner/dance at the local Bingham Arena on Saturday 18 October. It was very well attended by both members and guests, including the Mayor of Bingham. As well as using a local venue, the food and (some of) the beers were supplied by local companies.

During the course of the next 12 months Bingham u3a will be holding a number of celebratory events, starting off with a quiz. For more information please look here www.binghamu3a.org or www.facebook.com/binghamu3a

John Perry



RADCLIFFE ON TRENT u3a

The Air Raid Shelter, West Bridgford

It was a tight fit when 24 of our members squeezed into the recently renovated and re-opened (*for history purposes only!*) World War II air raid shelter on Abbey Circus in West Bridgford.

This is one of just two such shelters that survive in West Bridgford and has been rescued by a team led by Professor Chris Reynolds of Nottingham Trent University ably assisted by Jason King a retired secondary school teacher and an inveterate collector of second World War artefacts – tin helmets, stirrup pumps, gas masks and the like.

Originally intended as a living lesson on the history of wartime Nottingham for schoolchildren it has proven doubly interesting for members of our u3a some of whom can actually remember the Shelter or others like it being built in 1939 (I'm too young at just 79 years old!)

John Addiscott



The others are behind the cameraman!

DUKERIES u3a

For members of the Dukeries u3a, autumn is proving a busy season. A guided tour of Clipstone Headstocks proved to be a festival of Nottinghamshire nostalgia, with exhibits ranging from mining memorabilia to Raleigh bicycles and anti-aircraft guns.

Our Play Reading Group have recently celebrated their first year which has included readings of 'The Mousetrap', 'Abigail's Party' and 'Under Milk Wood'.

The Banjoleers are currently hard at work rehearsing for their forthcoming appearance at the u3a Christmas Party on December 15th.

The History Group has recently been treated to a presentation on 'Arthur Mee's view of Nottinghamshire' – a real trip down Memory Lane – and beyond!

Finally, the Ramblers enjoyed a riot of autumn colour with a walk along the Teversal Trail encountering some very protective swans who did have a nip at one walker's leg – happily protected by a knee guard!



Mike Mounsey

SOUTHWELL u3a

Southwell u3a is celebrating a major milestone, having officially welcomed its 900th member — a testament to its growing popularity and community spirit. Founded to bring together people no longer in full-time employment to learn, share, and socialise, the group has flourished in recent years. Its 900-strong membership reflects both its inclusive culture and the increasing appeal of lifelong learning in later life.

With over 80 interest groups — from art and music to walking, languages, history, and science — Southwell u3a offers something for everyone. Its friendly, peer-led approach encourages members to share skills, pursue interests, and build lasting friendships. Monthly meetings at the Leisure Centre, featuring high-quality speakers, have become a valued part of community life.

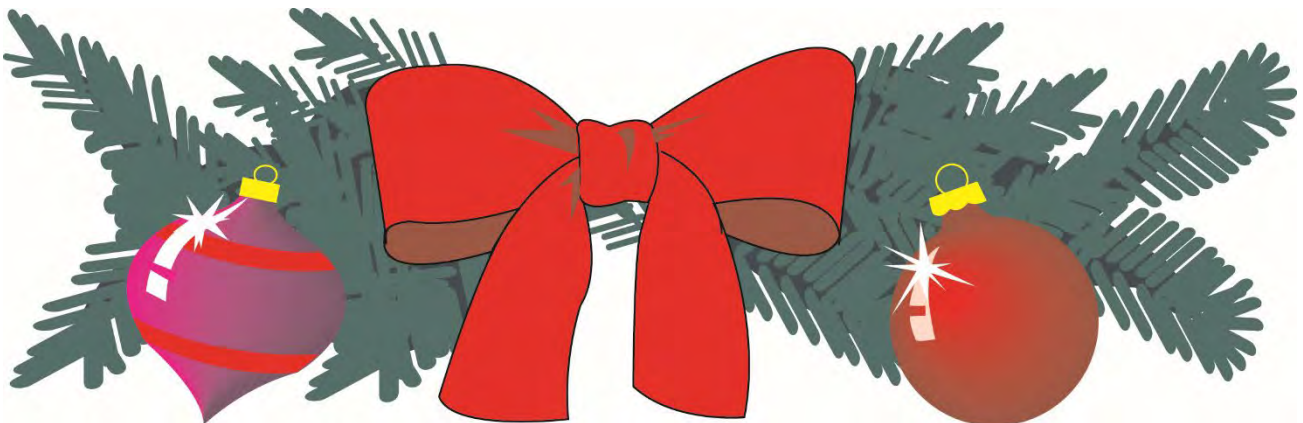
Chairperson Mike Freemantle said: “Reaching 900 members shows that the desire to learn and stay active doesn’t stop with age.”

Find out more at www.southwell.u3asite.uk and follow us on Facebook.



Mike Freemantle presenting free membership to Clive Morrissey to mark his status as the 900th member

Tony Mellor



MANSFIELD u3a

On Remembrance Sunday, David Drew laid a wreath – beautifully made by Bill Harrison – on behalf of Mansfield u3a to honour the heroes of our community.

Mansfield & District u3a was also proud to be the first u3a in the country to take part in a CitizenAID workshop ahead of its national rollout. As part of our *Dip In & Discover* programme, more than 20 members attended the session to learn practical, life-saving skills.

CitizenAID trainer Julie Taylor MBE delivered an excellent, down-to-earth workshop focused on staying calm and taking effective action in an emergency. A standout moment was the “Stop the Bleed” section, where members learned how to control severe bleeding using simple techniques and everyday items.



Carole Harrison



EASTWOOD & DISTRICT u3a

We held our Christmas u3a event on Wednesday 3rd December, with an excellent turnout of 118 members and 6 visitors. This was especially impressive given that the Church Hall boiler chose that very cold day to stop working!

Entertainment was provided by the Brinsley Community Choir, led by Charlotte. They were absolutely superb, encouraging plenty of audience participation as we sang along to much-loved classics and modern carols. One upbeat number even inspired a lively jive dance. Afterwards, we enjoyed refreshments followed by a festive Christmas quiz, rounding off a thoroughly enjoyable morning.

Many thanks to all our wonderful helpers who ensured the event ran smoothly.

Anne Steel
Chair



FOREST TOWN & DISTRICT u3a

We celebrated our 10th birthday in true style, with plenty of music, dancing and good cheer. Our wonderful volunteers prepared a delicious lunch, and everyone went home with cake and a special goodie bag filled with chocolates and a commemorative keyring made by our social team.

A themed quiz tested our memories, with all questions and answers linked to the year 2015. Our birthday cake was cut by Beryl Guest, whose own birthday fell on the same day – and she won't mind us saying she was celebrating her 89th!

Entertainment continued with singer Andy Sissons, who performed a great mix of songs that soon had everyone up and dancing.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable celebration, and members left in high spirits, looking forward to the events planned for the coming year.

Kathryn Cope





HUCKNALL & DISTRICT u3a

In the autumn of 2017 a member, who spent the winter months in Florida, introduced us to this new game called pickleball. The local leisure centre was booked and with a starter set of four wooden paddles and two balls we started our pickleball journey, and what a success it has proved to be. We now run two 2-hour sessions each week, with 42 players playing over the two days. We have had permanent court markings applied for pickleball and only see the future getting even better as we continue to increase the group's membership.

We know that there are several other u3a pickleball interest groups in Notts so we would love to meet up, play some pickleball (not too seriously) and enjoy one another's company. We can host or will travel, please just get in touch if you're interested. I look forward to hearing from you.

Bob McEwen



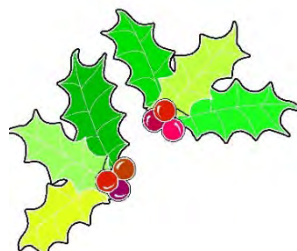
NEWARK & DISTRICT u3a

Following a really interesting presentation by a guest speaker from Veolia Waste Management at our monthly meeting, several members signed up for a guided tour of Veolia's materials recovery facility at Mansfield.

What an interesting experience it proved to be and what a learning curve! We were shown how to correctly dispose of everything from empty yoghurt pots through to Christmas wrappings, tin cans and even bus tickets. For those of us who thought we'd been recycling everything correctly, we were soon to learn how wrong we were.

Far from being a waste of time and "rubbish", the tour was possibly the most useful two hours we could have spent in a long time.

Maggie George
Chairman



STAPLEFORD & DISTRICT u3a

Hoping to avoid disproportionate bank charges, we are investigating registering with the Charity Commission and are very grateful for the helpful advice received from several other u3as in the Network.

Our Gardening Group arranged a timely plant swap in October. Donations and attendance were so encouraging that the group may move towards more “hands-on” activities in future.

Members of our Craft and Natter Group have produced numerous pairs of socks — some designed to match volunteers’ uniforms worn at various sporting events. These include the blue of Trent Bridge, the pinks of Nottinghamshire Tennis and CP Sport, the blue and orange of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, and the orange of the Perth World Transplant Games.



Our Guy Fawkes Night meeting included important safety advice from the local Fire Brigade, while the December fuddle was pure enjoyment. Paul and Janet Barras encouraged lively audience participation as memories of past Christmases were shared, and music by flautist Norma accompanied afternoon tea.

Marion Edwards
Secretary

RAVENSHEAD u3a

At Ravenshead u3a, we believe in being actively engaged with our village community and in being visibly at its heart.



Just over a year ago, we met with local Parish Councillors to discuss a community event that would showcase the clubs, societies, non-profit organisations and charities serving local residents – and on Saturday 18th October, it came to fruition.

Our committee agreed to co-sponsor the event in the Village Hall by providing volunteers to organise and facilitate the setup of the hall and to serve refreshments.

Ravenshead's County Councillor, Stuart Bestwick, said that villagers were fortunate to have so many hardworking volunteers, describing this as a unique feature of life in the village. He also thanked Ravenshead u3a for its considerable contribution to the success of the event.

John Butler
Chair



Ravenshead u3a volunteer Yvonne Bebbington

NEWS FROM THE u3a EAST MIDLANDS SUPPORT TEAM

East Midlands Regional Council Representative – put yourself forward

Are you passionate about supporting your u3a and representing its members at a regional level? The election for Regional Council Representatives is approaching, and we are looking for enthusiastic members to put themselves forward.

Candidates should ideally have experience of serving on a u3a committee or helping run a u3a, as this knowledge helps them represent local interests effectively. Regional Representatives attend Council meetings, share ideas and feedback from their u3a, and ensure members' views are heard across the region.

This is a rewarding opportunity to contribute to the wider u3a community, meet fellow members from other u3as, and make a real difference in shaping regional activities and priorities.

If you are interested in standing or want to know more watch out for the election pack coming out soon. Don't miss this chance to get involved and represent your fellow members!

Nominations open on 8 January 2026

East Midlands u3a event – 11 March 2026. Bookings open!

When? 11 March 2026, 10 am – 3.30 pm

Where? Braunstone Civic Centre, Leicester

I'm delighted to announce that my wonderful support team, the u3a office and I are putting on an event for all u3as in the East Midlands.

The aims are to:

- Inspire and support u3as
- Provide and share information
- Provide an opportunity for members to meet one another

The provisional programme includes:

- A keynote address from Allan Walmsley, Chair of the Third Age Trust, on how u3as may need to change to accommodate future working patterns and varied retirement ages. This will be followed by group discussions.
- A workshop on recruiting, valuing and supporting committee members and group leaders within your u3a. We know that this issue is an ongoing concern for most u3as and this workshop will explore possible solutions.
- A workshop on attracting new members, staying lively and have an interesting 'offer'.

There are two places available for each u3a in the East Midlands. Refreshments and lunch will be provided. **There is no charge to delegates for attending this event**

We appreciate that your committee will need to meet to decide whether and if so how many delegates from your u3a will attend and that Christmas and the New Year are fast approaching, which is why bookings are opening now.

Once you have decided who will be attending, you can book your two free places on

Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/east-midlands-workshop-day-tickets-1975786288977?aff=oddtcreator> Please include any dietary and accessibility requirements when booking.

Please note that bookings will close at 11pm on Monday 9 February 26. If you have any questions, please contact council@u3a.org.uk

See you there!
John Lewis and the Team

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.
- Maximum one article per u3a.
- 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 include the name of the author of your article and his/her status e.g. member, group leader, chair etc.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF NEWSBITES

Please send your articles (keep to a maximum 150 word count)
and good quality photos (as attachments please)
by 7th February 2026 to maria.newsbits@gmail.com

