

Nottinghamshire Network of u3as

OCTOBER 2026

MESSAGE FROM MARIA GABRIELCZYK, CHAIR OF THE NOTTS NETWORK

Hi everyone,

I am delighted to have taken over from John Butler as Chair of the Notts Network and look forward to working with fellow committee members and all our Network u3as to continue building on the excellent work already in place.

I would like to thank John for his commitment and contribution as Chair. The good news is that we have not lost his experience or expertise! John will continue in his role as one of our Council Representatives for the East Midlands, alongside Rosie Allen, ensuring that we can continue to benefit from his knowledge, support and involvement across the region.



I am also pleased to welcome two new members to the Notts Network Committee: Hazel Ward from Arnold u3a and John Lewis from Bingham u3a. It is great to have them on board, and I look forward to working with them as we continue to support our member u3as and develop the services and opportunities the Network offers.

Our aim remains to provide the same high level of support to all Network u3as, helping them share ideas, exchange experiences and find practical solutions to the challenges they face. By working together, we can learn from one another, make the most of our collective knowledge and strengthen the u3a movement across Nottinghamshire and the surrounding area.

One of our key priorities will be to continue to improve and develop our Peer Support Groups (PSGs). These groups are among the most valuable features of the Network, providing an opportunity for people undertaking similar roles within their u3as to come together virtually. Whether they are involved in membership, finance, learning, communications or other aspects of u3a organisation, PSG members can discuss common issues, share successful approaches, exchange resources and learn from one another's experiences. Just as importantly, they offer a friendly and supportive environment in which committee members can ask questions, explore ideas and work together to find solutions. We want to build on this strong foundation and ensure that the groups continue to meet the changing needs of our u3as.

Alongside our online Peer Support Groups, we will continue to organise four face-to-face Network meetings each year. These meetings provide a valuable opportunity for representatives from our u3as to meet in person, discuss matters of shared interest, hear about developments within the wider u3a movement and strengthen the relationships that

make our Network work so well. They also give us an opportunity to listen to the views and experiences of our member u3as and identify where further support may be helpful.

As we look ahead, I hope that we can build on the strengths of the Notts Network, encourage even greater collaboration between our u3as and ensure that everyone feels able to contribute and benefit from being part of the Network.

I look forward to meeting more of you over the coming months and working together to keep the Notts Network active, supportive and responsive to the needs of all our member u3as.

For the time being, I will also continue to edit Newsbites and help bring together the news and contributions from across our Network. I would encourage all our member u3as to share their news, activities, achievements and forthcoming events. Please send your articles and photographs directly to me so that we can continue to showcase the excellent work taking place across our u3as and share ideas and inspiration with others.

Maria Gabrielczyk

NEWS FROM THE NOTTS NETWORK

Notts Network AGM

The Notts Network AGM was held on Wednesday 7 October 2026 at The Centre at St Peter's, Ravenshead.

- The Constitution was updated to reflect the election of Council Representatives following the restructure of the Third Age Trust.
- The annual subscription was increased to £25.
- Thanks were expressed to Paco and Jean for their work in the Treasurer role over the past couple of years.
- The following committee members were elected:
 - Maria Gabrielczyk Chair
 - John Butler Vice Chair
 - John Butler Treasurer
 - Sue Blackley Secretary
 - Margot Gale Communications Officer
 - Rosie Allen Support Officer
 - Jean Hogg Support Officer
 - Terry Moore Website Manager
 - Chris Niven PSG Support Officer
 - Paco Saucedo
 - Hazel Ward
 - John Lewis

More information on our website [Nottinghamshire Network of u3as – Learn, Laugh, Live!](#)

A Year as Chair of the Notts Network

This is my final contribution as Chair of the Notts Network, having stepped down at this year's AGM after 12 months in the role.

You may find it somewhat surprising that I stepped down as Chair after only one year, but with the additional significant commitment that my role as one of your elected East Midlands Region Council Representative requires, I believed it would serve the Network better if I switched to being Treasurer on the committee, where there was no other nomination, and also to cover the Vice Chair role.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my year as Chair and would like to share some of the highlights. Statistics provided by the Third Age Trust for our region show that the majority of u3as in the network are experiencing moderate growth, with some seeing particularly impressive increases in membership.

One of my personal highlights was being invited to the u3a Sherwood Festival at Edwinstowe on 17 June. It was wonderful to see so many u3as from the north of the county taking part, with a wide variety of activities and performances on offer.

Three member u3as celebrated significant anniversaries during my year, starting with Arnold u3a's 15th anniversary in November 2025. This year, Bingham u3a was marking 25 years, and Southwell u3a was celebrating its 20th anniversary. It was good to see all three u3as going from strength to strength.

Throughout the year, Chris Niven and I have focused on one of the Network's key benefits to our member u3as: Peer Support Groups. We have been exploring more effective ways to communicate and make these committee role discussion forums increasingly relevant and valuable to officers in our member u3as.

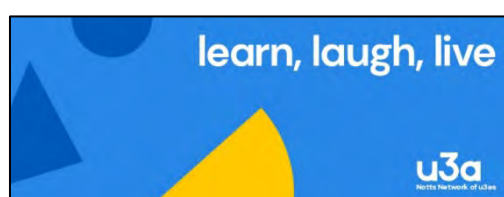
In June, we held a successful workshop at Newstead, following on from the previous year's *Interest Groups Matter* event. It was well attended and fortunately supported financially by the East Midlands Region on this occasion.

I would like to thank all members of the Network Committee for their support and contributions during my term, with special thanks to Veronica Perry of Bingham, who stepped down at this year's AGM.

I wish Maria Gabrielczyk every success as she takes up the role of Chair.

I will still look to engage with Notts Network members in my role as Council Representative for the East Midlands, alongside Rosie Allen. Our contact details can be found on page 4.

John Butler



NEWS FROM THE EAST MIDLANDS

News from your Council Reps

I am writing this just after u3a Week has finished and, to my knowledge, many of you have been involved in active campaigns to promote your u3a and the wider movement. Good examples are Bingham and Ravenshead but I am sure we will read more about others in this Newsbites.

Since our last Newsbites, activity for John and me, your Council Reps, began in August with a day linked to zoom considering Council business. This was our first of these occasions and, surprisingly to me, I found it worked well with very little talking over each other.



We heard from Sam Dukes about the “u3a and Me” report following on from a national survey of u3a members. “The findings confirm the strength and breadth of members’ experience across the movement. People often join to learn something new or meet others, but many describe benefits that go further. Groups and activities are the starting point. The wider experience frequently brings friendship, confidence, stimulation, routine and a stronger sense of purpose.”



To go with the Report there is a set of downloadable resources to help local u3as publicise and applaud their u3a. These can be used on websites, social media, newsletters, open day materials, local presentations and conversations with community partners. Resources include regional and national infographics, animations, static images, member quotes, case studies, the full report and the methodology.

I hope you have all signed up for the u3a Friends Newsletter which was used to send us information about the Report and resources. If you haven't done so, here is the link:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/newsletter>

We are extremely grateful to Sheila Crawley, Vice Chair of the Third Age Trust and member of Ashbourne u3a, for setting up a new Facebook group “Social Media for East Midlands u3as support group.” Here is the invitation: “You are welcome to join the private Facebook group that has been set up by Sheila for anyone involved in social media on behalf of their u3a.

Contact Sheila via the website Contact page or search for

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1089142077409793>”

Much of our attention during the last two months has been working towards our first East Midlands u3as Workshop, “Promoting your u3a”. We are delighted with the response with over 90 signed up to join us. The date is the 13th October and, there may still be places available after reading this so do join us.

We have also finalised the date for our second Workshop which will be on the 11th March 2027 at Langton Community Hall near Market Harborough. The third will be in April or May near Chesterfield. Themes for these workshops have not yet been chosen and so this is

where you come in – please let us know what topics are of interest to you and we will endeavour to put on events that meet your needs.

We continue to feel privileged to have the opportunity to support you in your endeavours to aid your u3a to thrive. Please feel free to contact either of us about any matters that you would like to discuss.

Rosie Allen

Rosie.Allen@u3a.org.uk

John Butler

John.Butler@u3a.org.uk



COLLINGHAM & DISTRICT u3a

Collingham and District u3a were at the Collingham Show in September. Whilst the day dawned damp and grey, an inauspicious start to such an important event in the village calendar, the sun soon started to break through and most of our volunteers were able to bask in late summer sunshine. The wind was more problematic: next door's gazebo broke in half! We, luckily, share a gazebo which proved remarkably wind resistant, though sadly, our back board spent a lot of time flat on the table rather than illustrating all our activities.

The stand allows us to make ourselves known to visitors, though rarely translates into new members, at least immediately – too many people from too far afield!

Christine Stothard
Chair



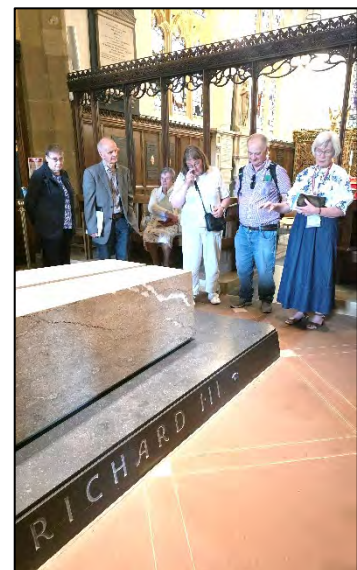
BEESTON u3a

Every year, the Beeston u3a History Group organises a day trip to a site of historical interest. Recently, we visited the Richard III Visitor Centre in Leicester where Richard III's body was discovered beneath a car park in 2012. The original grave is still visible.



Our visit began with refreshments and a fascinating introductory talk about Richard's death and the rediscovery and identification of his remains. The exhibition explores the history leading to his death at the Battle of Bosworth, while the upper floor explains the archaeology, scientific investigation and DNA profiling that confirmed his identity. The centre offers a fascinating blend of history, archaeology and forensic science.

After lunch, we crossed to Leicester Cathedral to see Richard III's tomb. A guide explained the Cathedral's history and the story of Richard's reinterment. Standing beside the tomb was a moving experience and a fitting end to a wonderful day out.



Dee May
Communications Officer

EASTWOOD u3a

The photography group met up for an outdoor meeting visiting Barlow's sunflower fields just outside Chesterfield, suggested by our member Les Dean. This was a very successful event; everyone enjoyed a peaceful wander through the fields where we spent time taking pictures for members to view on screen at our next meeting. The beautiful sunshine enabled us to savour the chocolate cake and drinks before returning to the fields to 'pick our own' flowers to take home.



Anne Steel

MANSFIELD u3a

Lockwell Hill Activity Centre – Archery event



Simon gave us a quick introduction and expertly guided us through the basics with plenty of patience and humour. There was a slightly puzzled start for a few of us before we discovered we were holding the bows upside down!

Once everyone had got the hang of it, we had some practice shots before moving on to a five-round competition. Things soon became surprisingly competitive, and it was great to see scores improving as the rounds went on.

By the end, there were plenty of smiles, some very respectable shooting and a definite feeling that we'd like to do it all again.

Understanding Dementia and How to Communicate with People Living with Dementia

Di Trinder, a SPECAL Practitioner with over 46 years' experience in social care, including the last 30 years supporting people living with dementia.

We were introduced to SPECAL, a unique and innovative approach to supporting people with dementia. She explained how the method can help us communicate in ways that reduce anxiety and promote feelings of contentment for those living with dementia.

Carole Harrison

RAVENSHEAD u3a

Ravenshead u3a Fashion Group Trip to Hope House Museum

The Fashion Group spent a beautiful, sunny August day at the [Hope House Costume Museum](#) near Ashbourne in Derbyshire. We had a perfect day to enjoy a scenic drive through the Peak District on our way there.



Hope House is the realisation of a dream nurtured by its curator and our host, Notty Hornblower. Housed in a barn adjacent to Notty's home, the museum contains an intriguing collection of period costumes which prompted plenty of discussion and admiration from the group.



Before heading back to Ravenshead, we enjoyed a delightful afternoon tea and had time to relax and chat in Notty's beautiful garden.

It was a fascinating and enjoyable day, combining our shared interest in fashion with good company, beautiful scenery and wonderful hospitality.

Sharan Jones



WOLLATON u3a

Bone Health Talk

Wollaton u3a have been holding several health talks for their members in 2026. We started with a talk on falls prevention, which was led by a retired community physiotherapist and occupational therapist.

At our October Coffee Morning, Lindsey Wallis, a volunteer from the Royal Osteoporosis Society Nottingham Support Group, came to talk to us about Bone Health, so important in the prevention of fractures. The theme of the talk was looking after our bones by healthy eating, the role of calcium and Vitamin D in bone health and the role of exercise in keeping bones as strong as possible.



The talk was very well received by our members who particularly enjoyed the exercise taster session.

If you are interested in a talk from the Nottingham Support Group, you can contact them here nottinghamvolunteers@theros.org.uk

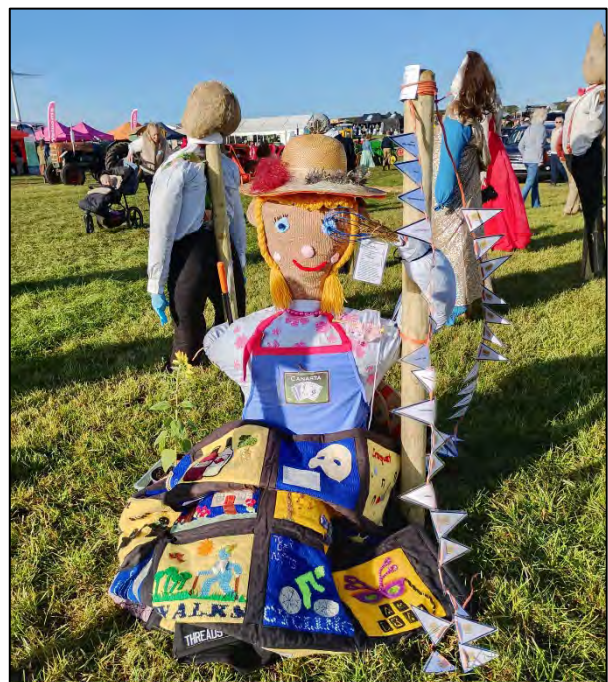
Further information on Bone health can be found here <https://theros.org.uk/>

Sarah Spilsbury

ASHFIELD u3a

Coinciding with u3a week, members of Ashfield u3a's interest groups, entered a double sided (two faced) scarecrow at Southwell Ploughing Match and Show held at Combs Farm, Farnsfield on Saturday, 26 September. They won 2nd prize.

Many of our groups were identified in the display which drew much interest; children were especially fascinated by the ukulele.





We also visited Lyme Park, a National Trust property with a very interesting history and lovely gardens. Several members took the opportunity to dress up in period costume, as shown in the portrait of "Gentleman Pam" (Pam Annable).

We are looking forward to an eventful end to the year and our Halloween Quiz at the end of October.

Wendy Walker

RAINWORTH u3a

The monthly Local History visit was to the Mining Remediation Authority at Berry Hill, Mansfield. Formerly known as the Coal Authority, it is responsible for managing the lasting effects of coal mining across Great Britain.

Our guide, Jackie, explained the work of the specialist teams and the records held at the centre. The Authority advises local councils, planners and developers on potential mining



hazards and land stability, helping to ensure that proposed developments take account of past mining activity.

Although county mining records have been digitised over the years, thousands of original documents are carefully preserved and stored for consultation when required. The centre also investigates mining-related problems, manages certain subsidence damage claims and treats polluted water from abandoned mines. Its work helps protect people, property and the environment while preserving valuable records of the region's coal-mining heritage.

Anita Bush

DUKERIES u3a

Recently, Dukeries u3a teamed up with Ashfield u3a to run a joint trip to RAF Cosford in Shropshire – and what a memorable trip it turned out to be! The museum contains a most impressive collection of military aeroplanes including the world's oldest Spitfire, a Hurricane, a newly restored Vickers Wellington and a Bristol Blenheim.

In addition, the museum offered a range of simulators for us to try. A Red Arrows 4D display certainly gave us a very realistic sense of what flying in these iconic planes must be like.

Elsewhere, our Ramblers have been enjoying some glorious early autumn weather with two walks. The first explored Birkland Woods; the second meandered along the banks of the Trent in Newark.



The Ukulele Group travelled to Nettleton in Lincolnshire for a two hour 'jam' session with their ukulele group. Reportedly, a great time was had by all!

Mike Mounsey

ARNOLD u3a

What a happy band! This is the 9th year that Arnold u3a has arranged a holiday in Spain for members (it's Rosie Allen who does all the hard work making the arrangements).



The picture is of most of us in Moraira, a short distance from Denia, where we are staying at a nice hotel.

Facilities here include six different sporting activities each day including axe throwing though I don't think anyone has signed up for that! We can choose from various trips and there's a very easy, and cheap tram system that goes along the coast, which many of us have made use of. And Denia itself is attractive and historic. All in all we are having a fabulous time. And to finish the old joke: Weather here, wish you were good.

Hazel Ward
Chair

Nottinghamshire Network of u3as

<https://nottsnetworkofu3as.u3asite.uk/>

STAPLEFORD & DISTRICT u3a

A new Interest Group was poorly supported as members' summer commitments took precedence, but the persistence of our Cinema Group leader finally paid off in September, when six interested members joined her to watch "Pressure". The film follows the impact of the unpredictable nature of weather on the precise timing of the historic D Day landings. All agreed that it was a lovely way to spend an afternoon, not only enjoying "great company, good film, but tea, coffee and a biscuit, all for £5".



As part of the drive to increase membership, we included our programme leaflets in our panel for the "Staplefax Tapestry" and were delighted to discover that they were all taken during the month it was on display at Stapleford Library."

Marion Edwards

TRIPS AND HOLIDAYS OPEN TO ALL NETWORK MEMBERS

New holiday for 2027

Scotland Holiday with Cairngorm Travel from 1st to 7th October 2027

9 single rooms left (no supplements)

Up to 20 double or twin rooms available

6 nights at Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie, Scottish Highlands.

Included in price of £549:

Breakfast and evening meals,

Loch Linnhe Cruise, whisky distillery, Black Watch Museum.

For further details contact Halinka from Ravenshead u3a on tripshol.ru3a@gmail.com

Deposit of £100 payable to Cairngorm Travel by cheque (passed on to Halinka) or card direct to Cairngorm Travel.

Alfa Holiday to Cromer in September

Ravenshead u3a members, together with members from Arnold, Ashfield and Forest Town u3as started their five-day holiday on September 12th. We enjoyed our comfortable journey, and Simon was our excellent and safe driver. Hotel de Paris staff warmly welcomed us, and we were soon enjoying our evening meal, selecting tasty dishes from the menu.

Our Sunday trip included Great Yarmouth, followed by an enjoyable and relaxing cruise on the tranquil Norfolk Broads. Some of us were lucky to see the majestic kingfishers in their natural habitat. Passing magnificent villas and surrounded by beautiful scenery, we were transported into another world, leaving all our anxieties behind.



Monday was a free day, some chose to explore Cromer, others like schoolchildren, boarded a local bus which soon looked more like a packed can of sardines as people and dogs were all crammed together. This was fun, so much laughter, an extraordinary experience and nobody complained. A steam train journey was another attraction, the volunteer guards and drivers willing to share their stories. We were lucky to view a railway carriage converted into a home, here the nostalgia was overpowering, as we remembered snippets from our childhood or teenage years on the posters displayed.



Our Tuesday tour included Sandringham, admiring a few stately rooms with paintings, furniture, even an unfinished jigsaw. The gardens on such a glorious sunny day, were an extra attraction. Just to sit on a bench or travel in a buggy around the magnificent grounds was a welcoming comfort.

The five days went by so quickly but we captured memories which will last for ever.

Halinka Rajchel
Ravenshead u3a Holiday Co-ordinator

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.

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 December 2026 to maria.newsbytes@gmail.com