



MARTOCK AND DISTRICT U3A NEWSLETTER NO 51, OCTOBER 2022

From the Chair:

Since this is my first Newsletter as Chair, I thought I would introduce myself and write something about my vision of the u3a. Firstly though, I want to thank my predecessor Diana Davies for her hard work guiding Martock u3a through the last two years, which were particularly difficult because of the pandemic. I am taking over with our membership of nearly 200 at our highest level ever. I know Diana is going to continue to play an important part in our u3a at meetings and through group leadership.

Although we were born and raised in the UK (I come from Hillingdon near London), myself and my wife Chris moved to Martock in 2014 to be nearer our family after 38 years in Dublin and Ireland; I was Professor in Virology at Trinity College Dublin, but also worked for periods in Germany, Sweden, Finland and the USA. My own interests are tropical fish, I have four tanks in a shed in the garden, the German language, I attend a course in Advanced German at Strode College, and Wagner operas. Although I worked and trained as a scientist, I have a passion for philosophy. I have a 1999 Jeep Wrangler, which I have to keep running, as well as a more modern car. Chris and I avidly support the Irish rugby team. I facilitate u3a groups in Philosophy, Science, Beginners German and an inter-u3a German Conversation Group.

The primary mission of the u3a is to support adult learning. This is not just academic learning, but trying or developing an interest, such as a hobby, sport, or a musical instrument. Our academic subjects are important and we have, for example, language groups and groups in history, philosophy and science. But we also have, for example, interest groups in gardens, art and crafts, a book club, bridge, music and dance. Our sports need to be developed, but several ideas have been put forward recently. So I hope we have something to offer everyone.

Our monthly meetings feature interesting speakers on a variety of subjects. Recently we have modified our approach; in addition to the usual talks, we have introduced some more serious subjects, such as our recent talk on Buddhism and the upcoming talk on Climate Change. This approach does appear to be productive as we have had a number of visitors from other u3as as well as good attendance by our own members.

The social function of our u3a is also of crucial importance. Members make

new friends by attending monthly and group meetings, and are able to meet old friends. Our monthly meetings in particular afford an opportunity to socialise with friends over tea and cake. The friendly spirit of cooperation and mutual help in our u3a is impressive. Take, for example, the intrepid ladies who provide us with tea, coffee and homemade cake at our monthly meetings. The dedicated hard work of those who founded our u3a five years ago is another example, and we are all reaping the benefits now. Just to give one more example, my own Philosophy Group has met from the start of our u3a five years ago. We discuss many controversial subjects, but I have never known anyone get upset or agitated, and the spirit is always to try to understand a different viewpoint even though you might disagree.

I do see a few problems though. Only around twenty percent of our membership is men, who are also even more underrepresented on our committee (I am currently the only man), and in most of our groups, many of which have totally female membership. We need to devise ways to increase our appeal to men. Judging by the high proportion of men in my own Philosophy and Science groups, and in the Science Group I previously ran for Yeovil u3a, I suspect that what is needed is more groups and talks that are intellectually demanding. Secondly, a large proportion of our members attend monthly meetings only, so we need to encourage more participation in groups; we welcome any suggestions for new groups, particularly from potential facilitators, and particularly for groups which might attract a high proportion of men. Although the u3a was founded for retired people, it has recently changed its policy to accommodate any adult who has spare time and interest, so we need to encourage more younger people to join. Some of our financial and publicity methods need to be reformed or modernised, to accommodate digital procedures. We also need to participate more in networks such as Avalon and beyond, in order to give members of a small u3a like ourselves more choice of groups, similar to those available in large u3as. If this approach is not taken, we are in danger of only being able to support the least demanding groups which attract most members at present, and some potential members who prefer a more intellectual approach may be discouraged. In our own u3a, we find it very difficult to get people to volunteer as group facilitators, even when new groups are suggested.

Following the AGM, we are welcoming five new members to our committee: Alison, Penny, Mona, Pat and my wife Chris is making a return. Sue Roberts has volunteered to take on a new role as Treasurer, replacing myself. Chris will play an active role as Vice Chair, but her subsidiary role is to keep me in order! Our Honorary President, Sue MacLean, who was the first Chair of Martock u3a, will continue in office, as will Mary, Mal and Susie. We find it difficult to find volunteers for our committee, and I am grateful to those who do devote some of their time to this.

I hope you will find your u3a experience enlightening, rewarding and enjoyable, and I look forward to my new role and working with you all.

Monthly meetings:

The next meeting on 9th November will feature Sigurd Reimers and his wife Pauline on "The challenge of climate change: who needs to act?". Sigurd is originally Norwegian, lives in Taunton, was a family psychologist before he retired, and has written a book on this subject. He is convenor of the Climate Change group in Taunton u3a. He and his wife have been involved as Climate Change activists in several demonstrations. Here he and Pauline will expound on this important subject that affects not only us but our children and grandchildren, and future generations, and suggest steps we can take to mitigate its effects.

The talk by Ian Winkle on the Tenerife volcano which should have been given for the September meeting was cancelled due to the death of the Queen; it will be rescheduled.

On 14th December is our Christmas event featuring Jan's Christmas Jamboree. Jan McNeill is a professional entertainer of 37 yrs working as support for Roy Castle, Michael Barrymore, Cannon and Ball and Joe Longthorne. Her Christmas Jamboree includes old Christmas songs, Christmas carols, some funny poems and stories and finishes with all the dance floor Christmas favourites. We will also feature a retro quiz.

Other talks:

Members of the Avalon group of u3as also hold talks at monthly meetings which may be of interest to our members. A list of websites of member u3as may be found here on the nascent Avalon website. Hopefully this website will soon be developed further.:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/south-west/page/28956>

Book Group:

The Book Group has just restarted. They meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 3pm. If interested contact Mary or Alison.

Anybody interested in opera?

We have received the following message from Crewkerne U3A:
Our Opera Appreciation group leader, John Bartholomew, is organising musical trips. Below is the list. If anyone in your u3a is interested, can they get in touch with him directly (jdbart45@gmail.com) and please specify that they are members of your u3a.
POTENTIAL TRIPS

Looking at the moment, just to receive indications of interest whereupon I will send more details before asking for any kind of commitment.

MY FAIR LADY - Mayflower Theatre Southampton - Thursday Jan 26th. 2.00pm.
All-in cost £75

The Lincoln Center Theater's critically acclaimed, multi-award-winning production of My Fair Lady is set to tour the UK after a West End run. This sumptuous production, featuring over 30 members of cast on stage and a full orchestra, is the first major revival of Lerner & Loewe's much-loved musical on tour for over 15 years and a truly 'lovely' way to celebrate the theatre scene back in bloom!

NB: To avoid potential traffic issues this trip will leave between 09.00 and 09.30

LONDON SOUTHBANK

Three nights' accommodation at The Premier Inn County Hall. Currently looking at last two weeks in April. Final choice of date will depend on what suits most people and availability of theatre tickets. Traditionally we have booked for The Royal Opera House, The Globe and other London theatres. All the venues on the river, music and galleries, are easily within reach.

Cost: best price for a standard double room for three nights on free cancellation £400. (£67 pppn)

Transport by coach – allow £60 per person

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Five days, four nights - August 14-18

Coach to Bristol Airport. Afternoon flight by EasyJet. Current advertised price for return £125

Central hotels: Travelodge £615 (£77 pppn) Premier Inn is preferable but prices not yet advertised.

We have managed overnight trips several times and are happy to handle all the bookings and provide further guidance.

Help available:

We recently made available £155 to the Beginners' Bridge Group for the purchase of a bridge table. If other groups need financial assistance in purchasing equipment, please write to the Chair or another committee member stating your case and we will consider it as long as funds are available. All equipment purchased will become the property of Martock u3a.

We recently made a grant to a disabled member to help with essential purchases that enable the member to participate in group activities. If you have a similar request arising from your disability, please write to the Chair or another committee member stating your case and we will consider it. Names will not be recorded in committee minutes, nor published, and your application will be kept confidential.

Help wanted:

We are investigating the possibility of recording our monthly talks for the benefit of those unable to attend. However, we lack expertise in this area. Is anyone able to help, especially in recommending the purchase of inexpensive video recording equipment? If you can help, please contact the Greg Akins, Chair.

Finally, if you have any interesting news or would like to publish an item in our Newsletter, please contact Greg Atkins, Chair.

Committee members:

Chair: Greg Atkins; chairmaru3a@gmail.com

Vice Chair: Chris Atkins; vicemaru3a1@outlook.com

Treasurer: Sue Roberts; treasmaru3@gmail.com

Secretary: Penny Whitehouse; secmaru3a@outlook.com

Membership Secretary: Susie Stakes; martocku3amembership@gmail.com

Events Secretary: Mal Nelson Hedge; martocku3aevents1@gmail.com

Groups Secretary: Mary Marshall; martocku3agroupssec1@gmail.com

Web Manager: Alison Bleasdale; webmaru3a@outlook.com

Publicity Secretary: Mona Mace; pubmaru3a@outlook.com

Committee Member: Pat Brett; commaru3a@outlook.com

Honorary President: Sue MacLean