



MARTOCK AND DISTRICT U3A
NEWSLETTER NO 54, JANUARY 2023

From the Chair:

I hope you all had a good Christmas, and

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

There is much in our u3a to look forward to in the coming year. We have monthly speakers on a variety of topics booked until December. Now that pandemic restrictions have lifted, I hope we can arrange at least one trip for the whole u3a. If anyone is interested in arranging such a trip, please let me know.

Monthly meetings:

The next meeting 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.

Unlike recent talks we intend to start this as soon as possible after doors open at 2pm, so don't be late! We aim to finish by 5pm.



We will also feature a quiz on events and personalities of the sixties and seventies, which we hope will test your memories and make you smile. Mulled wine (or tea or coffee) and homemade mince pies will be served at this event after Jan's act, which will take about an hour.

Then on 11th January our monthly meeting will feature a talk by Lisa Bartlett on Iyengar Yoga. This will be a talk about BKS Iyengar and his development of yoga props, creating a yoga practice accessible for all stages of life.

On 8th February our annual Brimsmore Gold Club talk will take place on "Gardening for Wildlife".

Other talks:

Members of the Avalon group of u3as also hold talks at monthly meetings, and other events, which may be of interest to our members. A list of websites of member u3as may be found here on the nascent Avalon website.

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

Family History Group:

This group has restarted. It is so much nicer to undertake your research with others, and it is likely the group will have a lot of information on sources that have been helpful, so please do get in touch with Mary.

Brimsmore Gold Club:

Discount vouchers for Brimsmore Gold Club and forms for the special bulk purchase of compost will be available at the next monthly meeting, which is the Christmas event on 14th December.

How is our money earned and spent?

A summary spreadsheet showing the details of our income and expenditure is provided to all members prior to the AGM.

Our main income comes from the membership subscription you pay, with a smaller amount from the profit we make on the sale of tea and cake at our monthly meetings. Last year we also had a donation of £300 towards rental of the Parish Hall, but that is not usual.

From this we have to pay three bills sent to us by u3a head office. Last year a sum of £304 was paid as a subscription for those members receiving Third Age Matters magazine. We also had to pay them £147 for a licence to operate Beacon. This is the software we use to register members, track their subscriptions, record the group membership and facilitators, and send out circulars to members. The largest payment though was £588 for general subscription, which is based on a per capita charge per member for the services they provide. This has attracted some controversy as most members don't use most of the services. The most valuable is the insurance for our activities and events, and it is prudent to have this in place. However, there has been some discussion as to the value for money they provide, and last year at the main u3a AGM delegates from the branches refused to sanction an increase in this payment.

Our own expenditure in Martock is firstly a small amount for stationery, stamps etc. We also have to occasionally pay speakers at our monthly meeting, although most give their services free, and this is never above £100. There is also a rental charge for the Parish Hall for these meetings. We pay £90 for membership of Brimsmore Gold Club, which benefits all members who are gardeners. This year a major expenditure was the £1219 we paid to Teapot Creative to design and construct our new website. If we have any surplus, and there is a small amount this year, we ask for suggestions from members for purchase of equipment and other expenditure which benefits group activity.

Our accounts are independently audited each year and the audit report circulated to members. Auditors usually act for three years, and at the moment our auditor is Ian Munro of Chard and Ilminster u3a. Sue Roberts' job as Treasurer is to

carry out financial transactions on our behalf and to prepare the accounts for the auditor. The online accounts system used by ourselves and the auditor is able to track and record names for payments by credit transfer and cheque (we scan cheques into the account), but not cash payments. It is for this reason that we ask you to pay by these methods and not use cash if you can avoid it.

Birthdays:

The following had birthdays in December, according to information supplied by themselves to us. We wish everyone a very happy birthday:

Sue Roberts, Gloria Graham, Lynne Stephens, Wendy Mullings.

A membership milestone:

We have just passed 200 members, which is the highest figure ever.

Correspondence:

The following short article has been sent by Ruby Helyer, a younger u3a member and a member of our German Beginners Group, who describes her experience since joining the u3a. It is taken from her blog “Sustainable Harmony”.

“The Community I Found in an Unexpected Place

When I moved back to the UK in 2021, I was at a loss. I had been out of the country for over three years and hadn't lived in my home town for over eight years. I was incredibly depressed, overweight, jobless, and my boyfriend was 4,000 miles away in the US. It didn't feel like returning home. I felt like I was moving somewhere new. But not where I wanted to be living.

Finding My Weekly Constant

I found a man who was running German classes. This was perfect. It gave me something to focus on and added routine to my life. I signed up. Weekly, on Thursday afternoons, I walk through my village and sit in this man's dining room with two or three other older people. Why do I mention their age? The group is targeted at pensioners.

How Can a 20-Something Join a Group for Pensioners?

The community is called the u3a - a national organisation in the UK with communities run in regional districts. u3a is The Third Age, otherwise known as

retirement. What was once a community exclusively for retired folks now invites any adult with free time. It costs only £17 per year to join the u3a.

As I am self-employed and work from home, finding two hours per week to go to German classes was ideal. I am likely one of the youngest members in my u3a district.

What Else Is Included?

For £17 per year, I am eligible to join any of my district's groups. These groups are usually held in someone's home and meet once a week or sometimes only once a month.

I choose to only attend the German sessions. It's been about seven months since I joined and I absolutely love attending. Progress is slow, but we have a laugh, drink tea, and eat biscuits together weekly.

Once a month, the district hosts a larger talk in the village hall. I attended last month's about Service Dogs UK. This month there was a talk on Climate Change which I was unable to attend.

Other groups available are: Sewing, Recorders, French, Creative Writing, Science, and at least 15 more. Anyone can start a group.

While the community's demographic is about forty years my senior, it is lovely for me to spend time with people I wouldn't ordinarily meet. My German teacher is funny and humble, and our classmates are forgiving of themselves and one another. We don't take ourselves too seriously.

If you live in the UK, and have the time, I recommend joining your local u3a. It's not about becoming the best or gaining skills fast, but it brings a great sense of community that I didn't know my little village was hiding.”

If you have any interesting news or views, or if you would like an item published in the Newsletter, contact Greg Atkins.

AND

The committee wishes all members a happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

