

NW U3A NEWS

Issue No. 14 August 2011

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1. From the NW Trustee

Dear NW U3A Member,

The long interval between the No13 NW Newsletter and this No14 is a result of a lack of urgent information. As you know we try only to send out Newsletters when there is a need. For less urgent information we simply update the website. I am sorry that for various reasons there has, until recently been no report on the AGM. This was rectified recently and Draft Minutes are on the website.

The National Conference of U3A takes place from 16-19 Sept 2011 at Nottingham at an excellent conference centre location. Currently the number of applicants is low despite the good programme and good central location. This is sad given the effort and cost involved. The AGM is on the Sunday of the Conference. It appears that many U3As are not supporting any delegates which is unfortunate to say the least. Please reconsider if you are not booked to attend and discuss with others in your U3A. There is still time to apply despite being it being already late.

The new arrangements for U3A start-ups are working very well in the NW where we are the leading Region nationally for U3As approaching full membership. It looks as if we shall get more new U3As registering as full members than any other Region in the year starting March 2011. Currently we have Winsford as full members, Middlewich, Wyre, Workington, Cheadle & Gatley, and Ellesmere Port all on their 3 month temporary membership and Hale, Madeley (on the Cheshire/Staffs border) and Skelmersdale all progressing toward this stage with a good hope of becoming temporary members during September or October. Others are at earlier stages but I have no doubt we shall significantly exceed a target of 7 new U3As registering as full members in the year to end March 2012 which I suggested early in 2011. If any of you have ideas for areas where a start-up might be a good idea please let me know. We have in the last year or two enormously strengthened the U3A movement in Cheshire and the southern and western outskirts of Manchester. (Holmes Chapel, Poynton and Bramhall as well as

Winsford, Cheadle & Gatley, Ellesmere Port, Madeley and Hale are all less than 2 years old.) I am most grateful to our volunteer Education and Development Contacts for the work they have done in this area. I have been visiting potential new U3As at the rate of more than one a week.

Since the last Newsletter there have been 3 meetings of the NW Region Executive Committee (NWREC), a meeting of the national Standing Committee on Education (SCE) and three of the National Executive Committee (NEC) all of which I attended. Certificates of full membership of the Third Age Trust have been presented to Poynton and Oldham U3As.

The NEC are working toward a 5 year forward look on the development of the movement informed by the Survey you took part in last Autumn. This is expected to result in significant changes to the structure of subcommittees and their remit. Final decision on these will be made at a very early meeting of the new NEC to be elected in September but detailed recommendations are being finalised now using the experience of the current NEC.

In the North west we have had our AGM and Annual Lecture Liverpool - 20 May, NW Regional Conference No1 on Running your U3A with Mike Long, Manchester - 28 June, and NW Regional Conference No2 on Finance and Size & Recruitment with Terry Hardie, Chester - 25 July. Reports on each of these are in this Newsletter (sect 6) and particularly the AGM is covered in more detail on the NW Region's website.

The Singing events foreshadowed earlier are now organised and a good participation of our NW singing groups from the north and centre of the Region has been arranged. Please see section 2 of this newsletter for details.

We are having another Easter School in early April 2012 (see sect 3).

A Science day next spring (see sect 4).

We are hoping to have an event in the autumn with parallel sessions for actual or potential Chairs and Secretaries and a joint session on Networks (see sect 5).

John Ellison – NW Regional Trustee j.ellison521@btinternet.com 01524 733400 10 August 2011

2. Singing Together (Workshop) Days for U3As in the North West Region

Many of our regional U3As have Singing Groups, others have aspirations to start such activities. To encourage a wider range of singing practices and to bring singers from across the region together to share their skills and enjoyment, two members of the Regional Committee have each agreed to run a Singing Together Day. The first one is in Formby, in the SW of the region and the second will be in Lancaster, to serve more northerly U3As. Although they have been planned to follow roughly the same pattern, there will undoubtedly be

differences in approach and content.

Singing is good for older people - it strengthens the lungs and improves breath control; memorising the music and words helps to retain cognitive function and the social interaction and co-operation needed to be a choir member is good for our general well-being. The aim of these events is for everyone to have great fun singing together.

Each day will start with shared warm-up exercises, perhaps some rounds, then each choir or singing group will "share and learn" a chosen piece with all the others. The leader of each group will guide their own selection and encourage full participation from everyone. To conclude the day individual groups may choose to perform a piece of music to entertain the others.

For the south of the region - Friday 14 October in the Parish Hall, Formby Village, from 10.30 a.m. - 3.30 p.m. with registration from 10.00 a.m. Those confirmed as taking part are Aughton & Ormskirk, Formby, Mawdesley, St Helens and Upholland with several others still under discussion.

Lunch will be provided by the ladies of the Parish and the cost per head is £7. Contact is Sue Watkinson of Aughton & Ormskirk U3A on 01695 422 423 or email wandsw@uk2.net

For the north of the region -Wednesday 2 November, 10.30 – 3.30 at the Friends Meeting House, Lancaster and those taking part will be Carlisle, Cockermouth, Penrith, Bolton and Lancaster & Morecambe

Lunch will be provided and the cost per head is £7

Contact is John Harman of Lancaster & Morecambe U3A on 01995 603232 or email j.harman@virgin.net

If any individual member of a U3A would like to take part on the day, perhaps with the intention of starting up their own singing group, then please contact the organisers.

3. Myerscough Easter School

A date for your diaries: early notification.



NORTH WEST REGION

**Residential School Tuesday 3rd – Thursday 5th April 2011
Myerscough College, Bilsborrow, Preston**

We are planning another residential school in 2012 and will be offering a range of courses including archaeology, creative writing, introductory Egyptology, geology, literature/philosophy,

and science together with some new titles. Most courses have limits on the number of participants and allocation will be on a first come first served basis. Places will be limited, so please watch the website for further details and a booking form.

The same venue as in previous years: **Myerscough College**, Bilsborrow, just off the A6 between Preston and Garstang, is a most attractive rural venue offering excellent facilities on a large campus. There are extensive gardens with a garden centre open to the public, a nine hole golf course and leisure complex. Accommodation is in modern single en-suite rooms with shared kitchens. The residential blocks are situated adjacent to a car park but are a 200 metre walk from the dining room, lecture theatre and study rooms. The teaching rooms are well equipped with facilities for presentations. Although there is some walking involved between the different areas wheelchair access is available throughout the site.

In addition to the daytime courses there will be evening activities including a guided walk, a talk of general interest and a social evening.

4. Science Event in spring 2012

The Science Group of Aughton & Ormskirk U3A is organising a "U3A Science Day" on behalf of the North West Regional Committee. The North West of England has been a major contributor to science and technology: its major universities have produced Nobel Prize winning scientists and its industry, from the early days of the industrial revolution, to its current strengths in aerospace, nuclear and the chemical industries, has been a major developer of technology, thus the provisional title is: **"Science in the North West"**

Content will be four to six talks covering a range of topics and we would hope to draw our speakers from local universities, industry and perhaps U3A members. Talks would be suitable for a "general audience" rather than for specialist interest groups so as to make the day attractive to a wide range of U3A members with a general interest in science.

Date will be in March 2012 (yet to be finalised) in either a city centre or close to a motorway and with good audio-visual equipment; large enough to accommodate around 100-120 people at an approximate price of £15 per head including lunch.

We are asking for initial feed-back to the idea, specifically regarding the venue, speakers, numbers likely to attend and confirmation of a contact person with email address so, if you are a leader of a Science related group and have not yet had an email from Jack Brettle brettlej@gmail.com , please contact him and ask to be added to his list.

5. Workshop on the role of Chairs and Secretaries and Discussion on Networks

Following our recent and very successful regional conference for treasurers with Terry Hardy, NW REC wishes to offer support in their roles to chairs and secretaries of our U3As. This we

plan to do by having two parallel sessions each of half a day one for each where challenges and best practice can be discussed. Officers will share their experience. Newer officers will be encouraged to share the difficulties that they have encountered in their U3A roles and how they have solved them.

Simultaneously we would like to put in place strategies for continuing mutual support between U3As. There is incomplete but valuable coverage by networks (clusters, links) in the Region. The NW REC believes there is real benefit to individual U3As in belonging to a network and wishes to encourage their formation, development and growth throughout the region, recognising that there is much variety in their size and involvement with each other. In particular we plan to cover the roles open to Networks and how to encourage participation.

Since there is likely to be considerable overlap in the participants, a one-day event will be held in a central location when representatives of U3As can contribute to either or both. We are hoping to offer this event in November 2011. We are applying for support and hope the event can be free.

6. Reports on activities.

(a) Distinguished lecture at Liverpool May. Prof Carole Mundell gave us a fascinating account of recent advances in our understanding of cosmology particularly of the importance and prevalence of black holes which seem to be in integral and fundamental part of most galaxies. Some of the most powerful phenomena in the Universe are driven by black holes, big and small - Active Galactic Nuclei and Gamma Ray Bursts. Comparing and contrasting our current understanding gained from this range of observations across the spectrum, Professor Mundell gave us a flavour of life as an observational astronomer in the modern era of robotic telescopes and real-time discoveries.

(b) AGM Liverpool May. Draft minutes are on the NW website. There were no divergence of views and we heard reports which showed our finances are in a satisfactory state, and that we have run a wide range of popular events in the year to end March 2011 with the only major problem being a regional conference that was scheduled for very early in the year which had to be postponed because of the severe winter weather.

Two constitutional changes were proposed by NWREC and accepted nem con. These rectified two difficulties that had been exposed (a) NWREC had no constitutional method of filling an officer vacancy that with particular reference to the early universe. occurred between AGMs and the extent of NWRECs power to co-opt people for special purposes had been found to be too limited. The changes, detailed in the minutes, rectify these and tidy up minor wording problems.

(c) NW Conference no 1 June

This was held at a new venue for us – Cross Street Chapel in the centre of Manchester. It proved a very attractive venue and was well attended. It was Mike Long's last engagement

before his retirement and his excellent advice reminded us all of his wise counsel and expertise on U3A matters having been National Education and Development Officer (or equivalent) for 12 years. We used the occasion to make him a presentation as a token of our appreciation. We had in addition parallel sessions on various aspects of running U3As which were much appreciated and led to both lively discussions and gave us many new ideas to take back to our U3As and so improve their performance.

(d) NW Conference No 2 July.

The main focus of this meeting at Chester FMH, another new and good venue for us, was on the financial and legal matters that U3As need to bear in mind. Again we had a well attended meeting with a stalwart in the form of Terry Hardie who is almost at the end of his 6 year period of service as the National Treasurer. He covered a very wide range of topics in a long morning session with lots of questions which was very much appreciated. In addition in the afternoon we had in parallel with a Treasurers session a couple of short sessions; one on the importance of growth in membership in getting more new retirees into the movement and avoiding stagnation and thus loss of vitality; and the other on how to circumvent limitations on growth of the movement. All sessions went well with lots of participation from the good sized group who attended.