

NW U3A NEWS

Issue No.8 July 2010

1. From the NW Trustee

Dear Colleague,

I have now attended and enjoyed two NEC meetings. The latest one was a 2 day meetings which seemed a good scheme in that there was now sufficient time to consider all agenda items properly. The meeting concentrated on work in progress including

1. The consultation with U3As on the support they wish for from the Trust. A questionnaire is being drafted by a small group (of which I am a member) which is planned for this summer.
2. The Trust deficite from 09/10 has come out smaller than expected and so the surplus always anticipated for 10/11 should contribute significantly to increasing the reserves toward the '6 months necessary expenditure' suggested by the Charity Commissioners for organisations such as U3A.
3. The various Regional Trustees had time to share experiences of local initiatives.
4. We also considered reports of the Development Sub Committee and the Standing Committee on Education which I have now joined.

At the subsequent SCE meeting the matters considered included the following items

1. Alex McMinn reported on the Research Committee
2. We also discussed the national support for Shared Learning Projects.
3. An initial report on the National Web Site was considered and further actions agreed.

Bramhall U3A have now got their official membership of TAT and when presenting it I found a 300 strong lively U3A that is already nearly filling their Monthly Meeting room. More U3As in their neighbourhood are still needed and we are investigating a Wilmslow start up where we have a few names for a small planning group. More volunteers are needed if we are to get going quickly. There are good prospects of a U3A in Holmes Chapel.

There are several new items and notices on the NW Region Website so please urge your members to have a look at it. The website has been revamped so that older material is migrating onto archive pages. Let me know if you have suggestions or any difficulties.

Our first year of operation and the Regional AGM are complete and we have new committee members and officers. I hope they will be as pro-active as Kathleen and the committee were last year. They have been set high standards!

I have been asked to remind NW Members that the Third Age Trust AGM is on the 9th September at Cirencester. Applications to National Office asap and at the latest by end of July.

John Ellison j.ellison521@btinternet.com 01524 733400 6 July 2010

2. News from NWREC

There was a meeting on 22 June 2010 when we discussed the following as well as other items discussed elsewhere in this Newsletter

1. The plans for the next Regional Conference for a date in early January 2011 and including possible speakers.
2. The possibility of a one day study meeting, in the north of the region, on Art in the Lakes. Venues are to be investigated for a meeting in March 2011. Carlisle is the initial thought. Such a meeting would probably interest NE and southern Scottish U3As in addition to NW ones.
3. The date, venue, and speaker for the 2011 Regional AGM. Venue should ideally be near Liverpool so as to give a rotation round the region .
4. The state of the NW Region of U3As finances.
5. The situation on Development teams and potential new U3As.
6. Plans for a questionnaire on your suggestions for our activities.
7. We want a logo for the NW Region. Suggestions are invited with a book token for £25 is offered for the one selected.

3. Reports on Past Events

AGM AND SPECIAL LECTURE BY DR JOHN PRAG - 25th May 2010.

The lecture was outstanding and covered a very wide area showing the power of facial reconstruction methods. He discussed both the methods and their evolution and its use from archaeology to criminology. Attendance included several members of U3As outside the NW Region.

The AGM was well attended and the minutes have gone on the NW region's website. There were no contentious issues. The committee (NWREC) for 2010/2011 is

Chair - David Starling (Neston) , **Secretary** - Eva Wilkie (Marple Br & Mellor) **Treasurer** Jose Anderson (Sale), **Ordinary Committee Members** Trevor Cheetham (South Manchester), Satinder Lal (Bury), Peter Monaghan (Carlisle), Mary-Ann Renton (Clitheroe) and Sue Watkinson (Aughton & Ormskirk), **Regional Trustee ex officio** – currently John Ellison (Lancaster and Morecambe) and, **by invitation** currently Kathleen Mercier (Hoylake and West Kirby) and Meg Shaw (Clitheroe)

ENERGY DAY at PRESTON (St Cuthbert's Fulwood) - 7th July 2010.

We had a series of fascinating (if worrying) talks and discussions.

Prof Max Irvine started the proceedings by outlining the stark problems we face globally with the growth in energy demand and the finite supply of fossil fuels which will become exhausted one by one. A simpler lifestyle would clearly greatly prolong the time scale, but a really simple lifestyle would only support a world population of a quarter of the predicted population of the world for 2050. The UK scene is particularly dire in that we have used up the prolific North Sea reserves in a prodigal manner and have a severe under investment in long term electrical generating plant that began when Mrs Thatcher was prime minister and continues to this day. 80% of gas will have to be imported (and so paid for) by 2020. Coal is already mostly imported and North Sea oil is running out..

Dr John Bissel outlined the situation on Nuclear power where Britain's early lead has been squandered to the point that all future Nuclear plants will be built by non-UK firms. The world, particularly China, is now building Nuclear capacity as fast as it can. The shortage of support for engineering (eg welders and the like) means it is not clear that even if the new government continues with the programme of new

Nuclear builds started by the last government that it will be possible to replace all the existing power stations (nuclear or anything else) that will simply become unusable with age in the next 10 to 20 years. It is likely that we shall start to have power cuts on a regular basis within 5 years or so. Buying electricity from abroad has big transmission costs and will of course be largely Nuclear generated.

Prof Christopher Whitehead discussed the use of hydrogen as a fuel. Its use is not normally as primary energy but it is useful in storing and transporting energy. Hydrogen is a strong contender against battery storage for transport. Indeed it is almost the only alternative to liquids for powering aeroplanes. Most hydrogen is produced using catalytic processes, although some is by electrolysis of water. Hydrogen is uniquely good for the environment as its combustion products are harmless (water and almost nothing else) and for its energy to mass ratio (thus its use in rockets). Being a gas (which can only be a liquid at very low temperatures) and being very inflammable are major problems. It is suitable for very small systems as he demonstrated with a model car which used an electric motor and a fuel cell to convert hydrogen from an on board hydrogen filled bladder. The bladder was charged by electrolysis (powered by an AA battery).

Max Irvine then went over the renewable options. The wind turbines favoured by most governments can never supply more than about 20% of the electricity to a grid because of the need to have a stable system even when the wind does not blow. Even to supply 20% of our current electrical average power usage would require a 3 deep strip of aero-generators all the way from Lands End to John o'Groats. The cost of the electricity is at least 3 times that of nuclear or fossil fuels. Direct solar energy conversion (photovoltaic) is also very capital intensive for a small return in our northern latitudes. It is good of course for small scale low power applications (eg calculators, road signs). For heating houses by far the best option for new builds is good insulation and combined heat and power systems. Such schemes are the most obvious way of utilising the 2/3 of the power from any nuclear or fossil fuel generating station that is otherwise inevitably thrown away in cooling towers or heating lakes or the sea. Combined heat and power systems require power stations in towns and relatively high density housing. Retrofitting is very hard. Ground heat pumps are also attractive for new builds. Tidal and wave power are two areas where we are currently in a good position but with every encouragement (which is currently not forthcoming) could only supply a few % of our electricity needs.

Overall costs for the next 10 years of importing energy are so high that there seems to be no way that our current energy usage can be sustained. Unless a major nuclear build at the highest rate technically possible is initiated from now the situation after 2020 will be much more severe. From a world perspective there is no way that the present world population can be sustained long term at present usage. It is not possible for the aspirations of the vast majority of the world's population currently using far less energy than ourselves can be raised to anything like our energy usage levels.

4. NEWS on Future Events

SEMINAR DAY ON RUNNING YOUR U3A

This is now well advanced and applications are invited. Details are given in a flier which is the appendix to this Newsletter. It will take place on 29th October 2010 at St Cuthbert's Church Centre, Fulwood, Preston.

5. Advanced Notice of Planned Events

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL MYERSCOUGH EASTER 2011

We have now fixed the basic structure of our 2nd Residential School. The only time slot available is 26th to 28th April 2011. We have several improvements including the evening meal being later, a quicker start-up and, as the last day is not at a weekend, a fuller last day. These will substantially compensate for there being only 2 nights available compared with 3 this year.

WATERWAYS EVENT – Exploring your local waterway

Two months ago, the Regional Trustee for London (Jill Moore) circulated a request to U3A members via the Business Secretary mailing, asking for ideas for celebrating the Olympics with a waterway-based activity during the summer of 2012 and especially joining with neighbouring U3As. She suggested walking to meet U3A neighbours, travelling by water or using the theme for a joint Study Day or whatever ideas come to mind.

The concept seems to have particular interest and relevance to the north west. The canal network has changed our landscape, made our history and remains as a resource for leisure, much improved and integrated – why not celebrate this together and learn more about our neighbours and our waterways? Within my own U3A I have thought about the involvement of painting and photography groups, local history and discussion, science and geology – you will have many others, as well as opportunities for social links with neighbouring U3As at canal bank pubs or on floating restaurants, perhaps listening to or making folk music or sharing speakers on a wide-range of waterway based topics.

Jill Moore asked for ideas by the end of 2010. If you have already responded, would you copy me in on your thoughts? If you are still thinking about it, or if you haven't yet heard of the idea, then please let me know and NWREC will endeavour to co-ordinate and support your plans.

Sue Watkinson - wandsw@uk2.net or telephone 01695 422 423 (Aughton & Ormskirk U3A)

6. Notices about Events from Individual U3As and Networks

We are happy to include pieces on Network Activities or items from U3As which are relevant to other local U3As. This is for future events that are available for members of NW U3As. Please send by email to j.ellison521@btinternet.com. We do not have fixed publication dates for newsletters so send items as soon as possible. They can also go on our website. In all cases the editors reserve the right to omit or edit items submitted. As always 'the editors' decision is final'!

LANCASHIRE LINK and LANCASTER & MORECAMBE U3A

Town Walk with blue badge guide at Lancaster on 4th August. People interested should contact Carol Allen, 2 Sand Lane, Warton, CARNFORTH, LA5 9NN,. More information on u3alancslink.web.officelive.com/DetailsofFutureEvents or from allen.hillview@sb-computers.co.uk

LANCASHIRE LINK and CLITHEROE U3A

Town Walk and talk about and visit to the Castle on 9th Sept. Information from Meg Shaw 01200 426103 email: margretshaw@fsmail.net or visit the Lancashire link Website. u3alancslink.web.officelive.com/detailsoffutureevents

PENRITH & NORTH LAKES U3A STUDY DAYS RUSSIA: ROMANOV AND REVOLUTIONARIES

Politics, society and culture before, through and beyond 1917 all feature under this title. Four members of Penrith and North Lakes U3A will lead study of this topic on Mondays 29th November 2010 and 31st January 2011 (10.30am - 4.15pm), £5 each day, venue close to railway station and M6. For full details, which will be sent out in early September, phone or email your name and postal address to Robin Acland: rtacland@googlemail.com, 017687 79672.

LANCASHIRE LINK and PRESTON U3A MUSIC and SINGING DAY - 6th December 2010 at PRESTON

We would like to know which singing groups would be interested in contributing to a U3A Singing day. A possible format would be a combination of

- a. some choral items that we would all prepare a bit before the day (ie have an agreed programme and have a rehearsal together on arrival in the morning with a performance later on.
- b. individual singing groups preparing individual items with the others being part of the audience.
- c. some christmas items which everybody could join in.
- d. some CDs of vocal chamber music.

Please let us know of your interest as soon as possible so we can start detailed planning. John Ellison 01524 733400 or j.ellison521@btinternet.com. If numbers are reasonably large it should be manageable including lunch for £6/7 per person

7. Non-U3A Events

TIME AND EXPERIENCE - Engaging Opportunities for Senior Minds

www.timeandexperience.org.uk, e-mail: infor@timeandexperience.org.uk, Telephone: 01244 511861

TIME AND EXPERIENCE is a project being spearheaded by Professor David Major and Julia Evans of Chester University Faculty of Business, Enterprise & Lifelong Learning and is currently being funded by the Northwest Development Agency. It is a Membership Association for retired and semi-retired professionals who want to put their knowledge and experience to good use and who want to go on using their brain power productively. You may wish to take on a fixed term project or work on an ad hoc basis or you may feel you retired too early and would like to return to full or part-time employment. Membership is FREE.

If you might be interested in joining TIME AND EXPERIENCE view their website or contact them by email or phone (see above).



APPENDIX

NORTH WEST REGION

SEMINAR DAY – RUNNING YOUR U3A

29th October 2010 from 10.30 to 16.30(approx)

at St Cuthbert's Church Centre, Lytham Road, Fulwood, Preston.

There will be the five subject areas listed below (some of which will be run twice depending on take-up) and each participant will attend three. At this stage the exact details are still being finalised so the details below may change somewhat. The day will be arranged so that each subject lasts for approximately 90min. Each group will have short introduction(s) followed by discussions. Facilitators will all be U3A members with experience in the field being discussed and include Mike Long (the National Education and Development Officer), John Ellison, Kathleen Mercier, Meg Shaw, David Starling, Sue Watkinson and others from North West U3As.

1. **Group Leaders** - finding & supporting group leaders, sustaining the group, and examining suitable ways of sharing learning.
2. **Technology** - sound systems, digital projection (for DVD, PCs, document readers etc), and building a website.
3. **Finance** – sources of funding, registering as a charity (when and how), reserves, drawing up reports, examiners for accounts.
4. **Committees** - efficient running of committees, taking into account the specific nature of U3A committees and that committees are made up of individuals.
5. **Communications** – promoting your U3A, internal communications, relations with external bodies, newsletters and diaries.

APPLICATION FORM for NW Seminar Day at Preston to be returned by 1 Sept 2010

NAME _____ U3A _____

Address _____

Post Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

I wish to attend the following options. RING the **three** you want to attend. If you are not too concerned please make this clear by ringing more than three and ranking them in order. This would help us as it may not be possible to arrange every combination.

- 1 Group Leaders 2. Technology 3. Finance 4. Committees 5 Communications

Please use a separate application form for each person. Please return this form as soon as possible since we need to schedule the details. Later applicants may not get as wide a choice of options. Include cheques for £8 per person payable to NW Region of U3As and sent to David Starling, 18 Davenport Rd., Heswall, CH60 9LF.