U3A

Northumbria Messenger

March 2010

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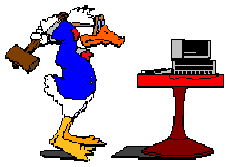


News from Mid-Northumberland U3A

Spring is in the air…just… and hopefully there's a spring in the step of Mid-Northumberland U3A now in its third year and comfortably over 100-strong, meeting in Longhirst Village Hall, just outside Morpeth where we've been fascinated by a range of interesting speakers.

There are some 30 activity groups offering a wide range of opportunities educational and social for the enthusiastic membership.

The Travel Group has tramped the valleys of Yorkshire, the levadas of Madeira (thankfully before the dreadful floods) and the ramblas of Barcelona. Rome is in their sights for 2010. The History group, having dissected Florence in the 15th century will head off to the Ufizzi and Ponteveccio in June.

Nearer home, the 5/7 mile-walkers have criss-crossed Nothumberland and savoured the magnificent coastline whilst others have worked up an appetite for a good pub lunch after a monthly Three- Mile Walk.

What image does the FAGs and the WAGs conjure up? The FAGs are the Food Appreciation Group whose enthusiasm for preparing and/or savouring good food leads them to meet monthly to cook or eat out or (hopefully!) barbecue and generally exchange and recommend good culinary practice. The WAGs are the Wine Appreciation Group - need I say more! Suffice to say that every now and then they get together with the FAGs and a splendid meal ensues.

The Local History Group is looking forward to getting out after a winter of talks on Jacobites, Suffragettes, Castles and dialects whilst commemorating the 200th anniversary of the passing of Morpeth's own Admiral Collingwood come Trafalgar Day. The genealogy group enables members to discover their own histories. Keen gardeners exchange ideas, visit each other's plots and pick up ideas at Alnwick Garden, Sunderland's Winter Gardens and Thorpe Perrow arboretum. The Art Appreciation Group has been to Tyneside galleries and Bowes Museum while the Painting group has unearthed hidden talent. Social Bridge shows signs of overwhelming sitting rooms in search of bigger accommodation. Philosophy and Theatre groups thrive and the Cinema group has put aside the popcorn and visited the Bradford Film and Photographic Museum. The Computer group is laying on advice sessions for those still grappling with 21st century technology and they're very proud of their new website at www.mid-northumberland-u3a.org.uk
Why not get in touch if you want to know more about us?

Bob Crosby

It is with regret that we learn that:

The Chairman, Marion Whyte, has resigned for personal reasons and wishes all members well.

Marion has been a great supporter of U3A and its aims and has put a lot of time and effort into her role as Chairman. We wish her every success in her future endeavours.

Editor

Bedale & District started by a nonagenarian!

At the request of a 93-year-old member of the community the Bedale and District U3A group started in May 2009 – 'seniors' in the Bedale area are a forward thinking lot!

Our first venue was the local Bowling Club and we started with a lot of interest and a surprising number of volunteers to form the existing Steering Committee. We were lucky to have experienced U3Aers from Northallerton to guide and support us but had expected more 'arm twisting' to be necessary! Group leaders were also forthcoming and soon we had 9 groups up and running. They were not large but were lively and thriving.
We quickly outgrew the Bowling Club and moved to BASA- the local sports association premises. Again we were well supported by Northallerton colleagues who recommended and even provided speakers for our monthly meetings.

As we near the end of our first year we have 123 members, 15 active groups and now need to move premises again – this time to Bedale Hall. Plans are well in hand for our AGM and we hope that we shall start our 'new' year with more eager volunteers to join the committee – *some guys to join the gals would be great!* It has been a very exciting and successful year and many new friendships have been formed.

Special thanks must go to Joyce McKay our regional contact for her invaluable advice and actions and to our Chairperson Beryl Pemberton whose local contacts and sheer hard work has given us such a good start.
She has been well supported by Secretary, Doreen Parker and Treasurer, Gladys Smith as well as other members of the diligent and supportive Steering Committee.
Many congratulations to all the members of Bedale and District U3A – go forward with pride.

Alnwick U3A takes 7 months to celebrate its first decade!

Alnwick and District U3A was founded in 2000, and we are planning a number of events to mark our 10th anniversary.

Saturday 27th March from 10am – 4pm: a publicity exhibition to be held in Alnwick Garden's Exhibition Hall. (Note: it is not necessary to enter Alnwick Garden to access our exhibition).

Friday May 28th 7pm: Ceilidh, with the Coquet High School Ceilidh Band.

June: A family walk. Details to be announced later.

Thursday 15th July: A river trip up the Tyne. The first outing the new Society arranged was also a river trip along the Tyne. It will start at 12.15, allowing people to take a picnic to have on board if they wish.

14th October: An anniversary dinner at the White Swan, Alnwick. Guest speaker: Fred Calvert.

21st October: The AGM will be coupled with a buffet lunch in the newly refurbished hall at St James' church, Alnwick.

Dilys Carter

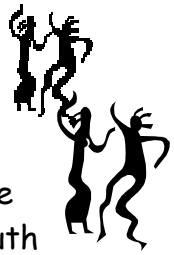
Creative Writing Course – the latest

Thank you to all those members who emailed or rang me in order to go on the Creative Writing Course.
It may have seemed like ages since I took your name but I have been waiting for the university to get back to me. It has now been confirmed that the **courses will take place in Alnwick and Durham**. They will start **on 12th April and will last for six weeks**. Unfortunately there are only 12 places available at each venue.
I have passed the names of all the members who were in touch with me (and there were over fifty) and the university will get in touch with you. It will be on a first come, first served basis so I know there will be a lot of disappointed people. However, do not despair, they have promised that they will put on other courses in the future. Good luck to those who do get on the course and please let me know how you get on.

Joyce Watts

Shall we dance? and/or make music?

If you were present at the LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER Celebration Day at Durham in July 2007 you will remember what fun many of us had taking to the floor in a variety of dance sessions. Also, at different times, we listened to or took part in musical items – handbell ringing, singing and recorder playing spring to mind.



Since then many of us have done our own thing and haven't met others from around the Region for a congenial social gathering. The Region's Development Committee propose that we combine Dance and Music (listening and actively taking part) for a Day in the early Autumn of 2010, probably in September at a venue in the South of the Region.

Would teachers/leaders who ran the sessions in 2007 be willing to give of their expertise for a short period of time once more? Have any other dance or music groups come into being in the meantime and would you like to let us sample a new activity?

Be prepared to bring your bells, voices and musical instruments to entertain, but also come to take pleasure in moving to music, or just listening and communicating with fellow members of theU3A.

To get this Day up and running please contact Joyce McKay (EDC) 01677 450494 or e-mail jmcmckay1@btinternet.com with suggestions or offers of help. I do hope I will hear from you in the very near future.

Joyce McKay, Northallerton and Bedale U3As

Science Day comments ....

Although lots of things deserve praise, we think the outstanding features of the day were the enthusiasm and competence of the graduate lecturers, whose skill enabled them to hold everybody's interest throughout. We just wonder who taught them so well on "how to lecture". The other feature was the amount of "hands-on" time we spent at the various events.

Not everyone agreed with the above writer.

The day was well organised, the food great. The content, however, was in marked contrast to the standards set at the Conference in Edinburgh last September where the speakers treated their audience as adults. At the Centre for Life, with a couple of exceptions, the lecturers seemed to forget we were not children. Some of the hands-on activities were quite fatuous. Had this been advertised as a "fun" day we would have had different expectations. We were looking forward to something akin to what the Ri offers and were disappointed.

Recent and Forthcoming Regional Events:

March 17th – Science Day at the Centre for Life, Newcastle. This was well supported with 207 people signing up. This was a very successful day with an opening address by Professor Tom Kirkwood. The rest of the day gave us an insight into different aspects of Science from Astronomy to DNA and Forensic Investigation.
There is another event now being planned for September.

March- April - Design Event with the Institute for Ageing and Health. Details of this were distributed at the Regional Meeting in January. This was to be a research project on Design for Living with the objective of presenting two papers at the ICADI* Conference at the Sage in September. This project is now in doubt.

April-May - A 6-week Creative Writing course to be run by the English Dept of Newcastle University. See page 3 for the latest info.

June - Newcastle and Gateshead U3As are planning a joint Local History Study Day. Actual date to be confirmed but it will be a Monday in June. Mo Morgan is the contact. (regionalu3alist@btinternet.com or 0191 252 9603)

September – Possible involvement in ICADI* Conference.

September 22nd - Another Science Day at the Centre for Life is being planned. Details should be available by the AGM on May 6th.

October - A second Bowes Study Day is being planned for October, after the new Textile Department has opened. Sandy Hood is the contact (regnewseditor@googlemail.com).

October-November – Possible 6 to 8 week Medical Course organised by the Centre for Life. To be run during the afternoon with a possible cost of £30. This is based on a course they run for potential medical students.

April 2011 – A Residential School is being planned for Easter in 2011. It is being organised by Durham University and will probably cover Astrophysics, Biology and Geology with the option of two field trips. Cost has not yet been confirmed but we hope it will be approx £250 plus a surcharge for the field trips. It will be limited to 100 places with the requirement for 80% residential.

Another Conference is being considered, similar to the one the Region organised in 2005 at the Station Hotel in Newcastle and a Regional Day probably along similar lines to the New College, Durham event. The Conference perhaps in 2011 where the subjects could possibly be "Where the Regions are now" or "Where is the U3A movement going" (or similar) and the Regional Day in 2012.

Unless otherwise stated contacts for these events are:
John Leiper (lorbottle@tiscali.co.uk or 01890 840 494)
or John Lloyd (johnlloyd73@hotmail.com 0191 567 4484)

*ICADI – International Conference on Ageing, Disability and Independence.
7-10th September, 2010 at The Sage, Gateshead

Ode to Gateshead's Betty

I recall 1O yrs ago going to Lyndhurst school
And signing up for the USA Local History Group
Headed by Betty Golightly it seemed
And I hoped there'd be a good troop.

What doors it has opened for me
New friends, new places , old treasures,
We've met in this room for 10 years exact
And listened to historians with pleasure.

We began with Joan Hewitt from Felling
A treasure in her own right
And ended with war memorials
Things close to our hearts on that night.

Hilda Grainger, Norman Grainger and music hall man
Came along and entertained us with story and song
They certainly livened Monday mornings
As did the tales from Stan Long

We've been to Washington, Durham and The Parlour
The Civic, The Park, Colleges old and new
The airport, Mansion House, The Keep
Where we climbed up high for the view

The Quayside holds many treasures
We've visited quite a few
Bessie Surtees, Trinity House, The Marine Museum
The Guild Hall, The Sage which is new.

The grandeur of fine churches always amazes
We stare at the wonderful feat
We've been to our local cathedrals
To St Helen's, St Mary's and Chester-le-Street

The visiting speakers have been fantastic
Some good, some amusing, some OK
Their subjects varied from the pantry
Murals, tunnels, coaches to tramways

We've swum in local pools with Les
Rubbed brasses with great pride
We didn't use Pelaw polish
But we did go up river for a ride

There were kites and chemists on our doorstep
The famous pubs on Low Fell
The sieges, the bridges, the cinemas,
They all had a story to tell.

I think I've covered most of the topics
We've heard about in the last 10 years
Now to please our fine leader Betty
Please choose your favourite from these

So on your behalf I'll say thank you
To Betty our group leader throughout
And let us wish each other good health
For being 10 years older, but remembering nought! ! !

And here Betty is a little reminder
To show we're grateful for the effort you made
In bringing these interesting folk to Gateshead
May you continue for the next decade.

Carol Brooks

All indoor activities resumed after the Christmas break. The local history group had a lecture on Roseberry Topping. Outings will start later in the year. The Garden Club has not started its programme yet but has the usual very active programme planned. Both Bridge Groups are in action and another Improvers Group has been formed. At the AGM all officiers and committee menbers were re-elected.

Harry Gibbs, Darlington U3A

more Science Day comments … I would like to congratulate you and the others who organised today's science event at the Centre for Life. The variety of activities was wide and the two events that I attended were of real interest.

Crafting a little comfort for children

Members of Wooler U3A craft group have been stitching a bit of animal magic into quilts for children who are ill or in need of a little comfort.

"We made the two quilts for the Linus Quilt Project which takes its name from the character in the Peanuts strip cartoon who was always seen with his comfort blanket," says craft group member Kate Allport.

Members of the group each worked on a different animal panel to be stitched onto the completed quilts which were then sent to the regional branch of the Quilters Guild. The Guild distributes the quilts to local hospitals and women's refuges - anywhere where there are children who need a litte extra comfort.

"The Quilters Guild has distributed more than 30 Linus quilts in the last six months but are always looking for more people to make quilts both for children and teenagers," says Kate. They can be contacted on www.projectlinusuk.org.uk

Anyone who is interested in trying their hand at a variety of crafts is always welcome to drop into the Wooler U3A craft group which meets at 2.30pm in the Cheviot Centre, Padgepool Place, on the fourth Monday in the month or ring organiser Jean French on 01668 281073.

Jenny Pollock, Wooler

Have you seen the latest DVD masterminded by Noel Adamson and John Cook at Whickham? You might even be on it. You will certainly know some of the faces and may be able to put names you have heard to faces you haven't seen before. Noel and John visited many U3As to make this fascinating collection of activities and events in the Region over the last few months. Every U3A has been given a copy – if you haven't seen it yet – ask your committee. Extra copies are available at £5 each – order through your regional contact or direct to Noel or John at Whickham U3A.

Shared groups are Shared learning?

Wearside and Sunderland have shared groups for Keep Mobile, Geology, Digital Photogaphy and Swimming on a regular basis. The direction and costs of the groups are shared and the scope to "learn from each other" is widened.
Is this one way to allow for increasing membership?

Are you listening, God?

Dear Lord,
Every single evening
As I'm lying here in bed
This tiny little prayer
Keeps running through my head:

God bless all my family
Wherever they may be,
Keep them warm, and safe from harm
For they're so close to me.

And God, there is one more thing
I wish that you could do;
Hope you don't mind me asking,
Please bless my computer too

Now I know that it's unusual
To bless a motherborad,
But listen just a second
While I explain it to you, Lord.

You see, that little metal box
Holds more than odds and ends;
Inside those small compartments
Rest so many of my friends

I know so much about them
By the kindness that they give,
And this little scrap of metal
Takes me right in where they live.

My faith is how I know them,
Much the same as you.
We share in what life brings us
And from that our friendships grew.

Please take an extra minute
From your duties up above,
To bless those in my Address Book
That's filled with so much love.

Wherever else this prayer may reach
To each and every friend,
Bless each e-mail inbox
And each person who hits "send".

When you update your Heavenly list
On your own Great CD-ROM,
Bless everyone who says this prayer
Sent up to GOD.com Amen

sent in by Len Cline, Whickham U3A

Saltburn members appreciate

I would like to use my article this month to thank on behalf of Saltburn District U3A Vera and Robin along with all the other volunteers'. We could not run without them. Our many and sincere thanks are extended to two key workers, Vera Kelley and Robin Wright who are "retiring" from their U3A "jobs."

As we come in at the monthly Coffee Morning, and especially if this is our first visit, we are all greeted and welcomed by our smiling team of "Meeters and Greeters". This warm and informative welcome has been organised month in, month out by Vera for many years. We shall miss you, Vera.

Robin from our very beginnings has been our Room Booking Coordinator during our Autumn and Winter sessions. Robin has carried out this task efficiently and not without some diplomacy, as he makes sure that all parties, group leaders, members and landlords are happy with the arrangements. Again a key worker who will be missed.

Howard Leake, Saltburn U3A Publicity Officer

Shared Learning Projects

Family History – Genealogy Project

There is a potential project about Family History in Tyne and Wear for 2011. This project will include a temporary exhibition and a series of events. The exhibition will highlight the stories of a number of local people in their quest to trace their Family Histories. Through telling these stories the exhibition will reveal aspects of local, national and international history. The project will aim to equip visitors with the skills and interest to carry out their own Family History research.

This U3A project will run in the way that the BBC's 'Who do you think you are? Genealogy programme operates. The group will research and investigate the family history of a significant local person (this person could be living or deceased and is yet to be decided).

Resources would be obtained from Tyne and Wear Archives and Newcastle City Library.

Numbers are limited. If you are interested in this project please get in touch with me -

Joyce Watts - joyce.lorbottle@tiscali.co.uk. Tel: 01890 840494

Hopefully there will be other SLPs coming in different parts of the region so do not despair if this is not near to you. If anyone knows of a potential project that we could get involved in please let me know.

45 and counting …

Perhaps conforming to a current view of University life, one of Durham U3A's most popular groups is the pub luncheon. Once a month some twelve to twenty members meet at a different inn - 45 to date - where, in convivial surroundings, we can discuss both serious and frivolous subjects- books, films, origins of words ('netty' anyone?) can one have too many daffodils in the spring? and now, of course, recession and elections. So, undoubtedly more sober, but otherwise not very different from the University of the 'first age'. And, for a newcomer to the region a great way to sample the local hostelries in good company - to return or, indeed occasionally, to place them on a personal black list!

Eileen Wormald, Durham U3A

VOICE North
Institute for Ageing and Health
Newcastle University

I am writing to say a particular thank you to all members of U3A who have taken part in research studies at the University Of Newcastle over the last few months. We very much appreciate the time that people have given to attend meetings and events, volunteer to be healthy controls for trials, answer questionnaires etc., and hope that you have found it enjoyable too!

This work is co-ordinated through VOICE North at the Institute for Ageing and Health (IAH) at Newcastle University. The IAH has an extensive programme of work which aims to understand the causes of conditions such as Parksinson's disease, stroke and dementia which touch so many of our lives, as well as developing treatments and services to support and care for older people. We are also looking at how to prevent many conditions and ensure people are active and healthy for as long as possible. We are immensely grateful to you for sharing your experiences and hugely value your contribution. Our partnership means that we are able to understand the priorities and experience of older people. To date people from U3A have been involved in a wide range of projects - over 50 projects are currently ongoing, which cover everything from understanding what new products and services we need to develop for older people, to developing a new vitamin-packed biscuit which will help to ensure a person gets all the nutrients they need when they are unwell and perhaps aren't feeling like eating.

Some of you may recall reading about a study taking place at the Clinical Ageing Research Unit, Newcastle University, concerning the motor and cognitive control of gait in 130 people with Parkinson's disease and VOICE North is involved in recruiting 100 older adults without Parkinson's disease. Professor Lynn Rochester, who heads the study, has advised us that 30 older adults have so far been assessed. The assessment takes less than 2 hours at a time to suit you, and involves a range of walking, balance and cognitive tests. People recruited for the study have so far found the experience both interesting and enjoyable – and often surprised at their own abilities! If you are interested in participating, please get in touch.

On 12th and 19th November 2009 we held two events for U3A members on 'Inclusive design for all ages'. Over 150 people attended the event at the Centre for Life. We are currently exploring the best way to involve more members in this area, and how to take this work forward, perhaps by undertaking a larger survey of U3A members to canvas views and experiences on design.

All researchers who are involved in VOICE North are asked to feedback the results of their projects and we hope to send details to members throughout they year.

The involvement of U3A members is making a tremendous difference. We are very keen that as many people as possible continue to get involved – currently over 600 people from across the region are members. No qualifications or specific experience is necessary, just that you are interested in contributing to research on ageing. We hope there is something to interest everyone. We pay all travel expenses and a voucher for taking part.

If you would like more information and would like to get involved, please contact Dr Lynne Corner (Engagement Manager) or Sarah Armstrong (Engagement Secretary) at the Institute for Ageing and Health, Newcastle University - Telephone 0191 248 1353; email sarah.armstrong2@ncl.ac.uk. Details are also available on the IAH website - www.ncl.ac.uk/iah.

We very much look forward to hearing from you. Best wishes, Lynne Corner

Words By The Water

Six members of Morpeth U3A have just returned from Keswick where, for the seventh year in succession, we have been enjoying all that the Literature Festival has to offer. Writers and readers get together in the Theatre by the Lake to share the pleasure of books, words and ideas; there is something to satisfy all tastes, from art, philosophy, music, history and literature to politics and local issues, and this time Horatio Clare and Tim Dee inspired us, as they discussed our emotional, intellectual and social response to birds and why they fascinate us. The quality remains consistent and it says a lot for the calibre of the speakers that during five days of brilliant sunshine in that lovely setting we spent our time in the theatre!

Melvyn Bragg, the President, delighted us with two sessions, "In Our Time" and "South Bank, the final cut". Martin Bell is always good value; he discussed the future of politics following the expenses scandal and, in another session, the works of Adrian Bell, his father. Among other notables were Libby Purves, "Shadow Child", Diarmid MacCulloch, "The History of Christianity", Juliet Barker, "Conquest", [sequel to Ágincourt], and Chris Rodgers, ITN undercover journalist, with shocking revelations of the treatment of abandoned children in Turkey and Romania.

Michael Buerk made several appearances in discussion with other authors, and there were many more, too numerous to mention.

Joan Meikle, Morpeth U3A

Reactions and musings from the Regional Day in Ponteland

I enjoyed the Regional Meeting at Ponteland, writes Ken Kay, Chair of Cestria U3A – the information passed on by the two speakers was very useful and presented in a lucid manner. The general atmosphere reflected the vibrant approach of the Branches, the enthusiasm of the members and their positive view of the future. Floreat U3A!!

Following Terry Hardy's assertion that the The Third Trust were anxious not to be seen as "top down" but were there to listen to what members wanted, Group One asked if consideration could be given to moving the southern border of the North East Region a little further south to incorporate the U3As in North Yorkshire which had been members since the Northumbria Region was founded 15 years ago. The answer came back quickly – a resounding "No." He explained the geographic boundaries set by the Government would have to be retained, but that U3As outside the "North East" could be "guests". (This is due to be discussed at the Regional Meeting.) *Ed.*

More thoughts, reactions and musings from the Regional Day …

Disturbance, dissention and dismay were the feelings of the day when the letter from Terry Hardie, NEC treasurer, was received throughout Northumbria. Not a region but a Network! What can he mean? We were the first, the most effective, the best. No other linkage of U3As in the country is so co-hesive, so active, so all-embracing. We have organised ourselves, set up a committee, a newsletter and a website. To receive the benefits of co-operation, every U3A within the region joins in, even members from outside! And therein lay the problem.

It began to become obvious that their interpretation of a region was different from ours. In most areas of the country, U3As which are close to each other have linked together in loosely associated groupings for joint activities. They are known to the NEC as "networks". However when the NEC agreed to adopt the government designated regions and have one representative voted for by all the U3As within that region, we didn't fit their pattern.

We are one of the only fully fledged operational regions in existence (except for Northern Ireland and Scotland), and IS and TH are battling around the country trying to show that the funding they have to deal with will be allocated on a Regional basis .

Consternation arose at the meeting held in Ponteland when they came to hear what we had to say. We have lots of very active members in our region from N.Yorks and Scotland, and it became obvious that they won't have a vote for the representative of their chosen region, because their U3As are outside it (although they will be able to vote in the Region they have chosen not to belong to.)

But, a compromise became obvious and was agreed to. If this network of U3As which we have called Northumbria Region submits a budget to the NEC, the required money will be paid to the region. If we choose to use it for events which include members from neighbouring regions, then that is up to us. We can keep our very hard working friends (which include a Northumbria Region ex-chairman and one of the two current Education and Development Contacts, who visit places to set up new U3As where there aren't any, or where existing ones are becoming too big, and who organise days to help share ideas for running U3As) and if we choose to spend our budget to include them, then that is up to us.

All the pent up tension, aggrieved frowns and outraged sensibilities turned to feelings of relief and vindication as our worries were repudiated. Goodwill and camaraderie were re-established, the outspoken doubters reassured. Even if the NEC do think of us as a Network, even if U3As in the North East Region do encompass and welcome members from outside, we can still call ourselves what we want to, we can even spend the money how we decide, and, as the jovial bulk of Ian Searle and Terry Hardie receded across the border with their reassurances flying bravely out behind them, we cheered and clapped, knowing that all will be well for Northumbria Region after all.

Mo Morgan

More on January's regional meeting …

What about our Regional Meeting with a difference, in Ponteland?
I would like to make some comments on the theme of the Day and the new, excellent Regional DVD which we were able to collect at that meeting.

National Officials rightly feel the suspicions held by ordinary members of their motives and, therefore, to quell these suspicions they plan to be more helpful to the Regions in all manner of ways. I can only see that this greater communication will be good for us all and that we should welcome the help and cooperation being offered by the National Committee.

I have come to that opinion because of the very strength of our own Region: look at the DVD and see the enthusiasm, the diversity of activities on offer and the camaraderie generated. I don't think that such a region would ever be cowed by any power grabbing moves from the centre and, indeed, I heard a recognition and respect for our Region in comments made by the National Chairman, Ian Searle, towards the end of the January meeting.

Will it matter if we are technically a "Network" rather than a "Region"? Shall we not put aside our suspicions and give the National Officials the benefit of the doubt?

Gillian Williams, Vice Chairman, Ponteland.

… and finally on this topic -

This was a full day's meeting, which I admit to not particularly looking forward to, as the agenda had looked a little 'dry' and I was not sure exactly what Ian Searle (National U3A Chairman) or Terry Hardie (National U3A Treasurer) were up to travelling up to our frozen wastes, to find out what our region was about. I am glad to say that the day turned out very well, not just for the opportunities it gave of meeting U3A members from all over the region, but for the frank exchanges of views it afforded us with our National Chairman and Treasurer.

Papers had been sent out by email regarding issues which needed to be addressed locally by our Regional Chairman which included IT & Communications report, Developments sub-committee report, Newsletter Editor's Report and Trustee's report. Additionally Brian Stephenson had written a paper on the basics of the Northumbria Region, with clear references to what the Region has offered to its member U3As since its establishment in 1994.These gave a good background to what the Regional co-ordinators have been up to and was a good 'jumping off'' point to begin discussions with the National U3A Chairman and Treasurer.

To cut a long story short, we seem to be in good shape compared to other regional or network structures elsewhere in the country, though nationally they would really prefer us to call ourselves a 'network' rather than a 'region' as we encompass five U3As which are technically not Northumbria. This seemed to be more a problem of semantics or politics and was hotly contested by the members present especially since many of the officers have been recruited from the five U3As beyond Northumbria's 'official' borders.

A model constitution is currently under discussion at National levels and is to be ratified by the Charities Commission. This will be sent out to U3As for consideration for adoption to update current constitutions. A full version of the report is available if anyone wants to see it.

Jenny Roberts, Ryton & District

RECORDER PLAYING WORKSHOP
MERTON HALL, PONTELAND on SATURDAY 10TH APRIL 2010

After a very enjoyable first get-together in July last year the recorder group players of Northallerton, Ponteland and Wooler U3As have decided to meet again this year at the same convenient and very pleasant venue. We are delighted to say that the group from Morpeth is also joining us.
Is there any other U3A member 'out there' who does not belong to an existing U3A recorder group, but who enjoys playing a recorder? We extend a friendly invitation to you to bring along your instrument, of whatever size, and share in a happy session of music making under the direction of John Hawkes.
Each group has already chosen the music we will all play together. We like to give ourselves a challenge, but nothing is too difficult for sight reading. The object of the day is to have an enjoyable time improving our playing in a larger ensemble.
Meet from 11am for coffee and getting to know each other. Bring a music stand and a picnic lunch. Buy your own drinks. Play from noon, with a lunch break, **finishing at 3pm.**

A charge of £3 per person is being made to cover hall hire and expenses.

For more information re music and directions to the hall contact Joyce McKay (EDC) Phone 01677 450494 or e-mail jmcmckay1@btinternet.com

URGENTLY NEEDED
VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST THE EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTACTS IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF NORTHUMBRIA REGION

Can you offer some time to help in the preparation of new materials and displays for the varied meetings we hold? Can you help to organise the layout of these in a hall before a meeting begins? There is much hidden work done before we actually put on an 'event' and we would appreciate somebody coming forward to help us.

Please get in touch with us for more information.
Margaret Minns (0191 414 3924) or wwu3a@hotmail.com
Joyce McKay (01677 450494) or jmcmckay1@btinternet.com

To all U3As

Are you planning an open day or special event?
Could you use a banner or a notice board?

Are you aware that our region has 4 boards and 2 banners just waiting to be used.

If interested contact

Joyce Mc Kay	01677 450 494	1 board, 1banner
Margaret.Minns	0191 414 3924	1 board, 1banner
Mo Morgan	0191 242 9603	1 board
Maureen Stephenson	01665 575 552	1 board

We hope to hear from you and that you will
collect and return any equipment borrowed. There is no charge for its use.

The Development Committee

Bede of Jarrow members invite you to join them on the 1st Monday of each month at Primrose Village. You certainly won't be disappointed, they promise.

Our Art group is one to be proud of. It accounts for 37% of our membership, and Mavis Hudson and Brian York (our resident artists) have to run 2 sessions each week because there are too many for one venue.
Their first exhibition was held recently in the Central Library in South Shields. The artists have made much progress in one year since the art group formed. Most members had never painted or drawn since school days, but their success is tremendous, and they are a tribute to Mavis (who paints flora in oils and acrylics) and Brian (an outstanding artist who paints wonderful pastel portraits).
We meet at Primrose Village, Lambton Terrace, Jarrow, each Wednesday afternoon from 1pm until 4pm. Do come along - you will be made welcome.

The History group is holding another exhibition on the History of South Tyneside from 26th April until 4th July, which is being held at the South Shields Museum (opposite Minchellas on Ocean Rd). The exhibition includes memories of the old cinemas, drawings and photograph, and audio and film footage of South Shields. Jazz bands from the past, post-war memories of the old streets, then and now, sculptures, and photographs of the industries that no longer exist on South Tyneside are all included from our members.

A tour of the Sage, Gateshead and a visit to the Shipley Art Gallery to see "The Supremes" costumes have also been enjoyed.

For copies of this publication and other regional information visit the Northumbria Regional website www.nru3a.co.uk

Teesdale recommends...

....that if you haven't already done so, you invite **Tim Charlson, of The Churches Conservation Trust**, to come and speak at a meeting. A lull in the wintry January weather allowed our membership a brief respite from dodging snowdrifts, digging out drives and edging over slippery paths. Consequently many of us made it to the January Main Meeting and we were amply rewarded for our efforts.

Tim Charlson, our January speaker, works for the Churches Conservation Trust. He is enthusiastic about what he does and he has a flair for transmitting his interest to his audience. The Churches Conservation Trust is "the leading body conserving England's most beautiful and historic churches which are no longer needed for regular worship" and during the course of the presentation, "Caring for 100 Years of History", we were entertained, we were educated, we were amused and we were inspired to visit some of these places for ourselves. At the end of the talk, during the questions, a new member spoke for all when she asked, "Have you brought a collecting box so individual members can show their own appreciation for your talk and also help the work of the Trust?" "Hear, hear!" cried the audience spontaneously and approvingly.

Tim arrived with plenty of time to spare (one worry less when the speaker is safely in the Hall). His speaking voice was easily audible to all. We now have links we can develop with the people who look after one of our lovely local churches (Stanwick St John). In May we are due to meet up with Tim again for a guided visit around two of the Churches currently in the care of the Trust (Coverham and Wensley) and I have never known a trip book up so rapidly.

Contact details for Tim Charlson: TCharlson@tcct.org.uk (supplied with his permission)
To check out The Churches Conservation Trust there is an extremely comprehensive website http://www.visitchurches.org.uk/

Anne Harbron, Teesdale U3A

Final copy date for the next edition of Northumbria Messenger is Saturday 12th June 2010

Please send to Sandy Hood at
email: regnewseditor@googlemail.com
snail mail: 4 Glenfield Road, Darlington DL3 8DZ
tel: 01325 384496

Treading the Borders

Wooler U3A is putting on another play - their third in four years. This time it will be staged at The Playhouse in Alnwick, the first time the group has performed outside Wooler.

The play, "The Reiver's Return" has been written by Wooler U3A member Jenny Pollock, and is about family feuds from the time of the border reivers to the present day.

The production is part of North Northumberland's first-ever **Drama Festival** being staged on the **weekend of June 5/6 this year**. The theme is local history, and all the productions have been written by amdram groups in the area.

"The Reiver's Return" is one of four short plays being put on in Alnwick on the Saturday, and another four plays will be staged at The Maltings in Berwick on the Sunday. Both days will run from 12noon - 6pm. As well as the plays there will be two talks on local history themes. Tickets for the whole day will cost £15 and £12 for concessions and can be bought from the theatres' box offices.

The Alnwick event is being run under the title "Look Back in Alnwick" and the Berwick event as "Border Tales". Anyone who would like to find out more can contact Frank Mansfield on 01668 281219 or email: fomansfield@yahoo.com

Jenny Pollock, Wooler

Technophobe turns website pro for local U3A!

Web design and maintenance is clearly not suited to everyone. Some people are almost phobic about computers and surfing the net!

Teresa Tomlinson was one such person, until she joined the committee of Prudhoe and District U3A and was thrown into the role of website development.

"As a new member of the committee, I needed a task," Teresa explains, "We had a web space that needed content, and I was considered the woman to provide it!" So with a head full of ideas, and limited computer knowledge, Teresa visited her U3A regional office for a lesson in website design. "The help I received from the regional office was invaluable and Mo's (Morgan, Regional Contact List Editor) patience commendable!" says Teresa.

See what can be done on www.nru3a.co.uk/northumberland/prudhoe.html

Awareness Day May 10th
at Marley Hill Community Centre, Marley Hill
(just off the A1 near the Metro Centre)

Introduction by Joyce McKay
Led by Margaret Minns

The Reason for these Awareness Days

These days are intended for all members, particularly those in new U3As and new members in established U3As as an opportunity to have some questions answered, find out how other U3As function and meet members from other parts of the region . You may choose the event you wish to attend by venue or date!

Most importantly come along to communicate your expectations of U3A.
It is hoped that all who attend will join in discussion, questions and answers.

We hope you will come along and enjoy.

The actual format of the day will depend on the numbers attending. Limit 30

A detailed programme will be available at Registration

There is no charge for Awareness Days but do bring a packed lunch
tea, coffee, etc. will be available

For more details, or to apply for a place, contact:
Margaret Minns, 0191 414 3924- wwu3a@hotmail.com or
Joyce Mckay, EDC 01677 450491- jmcmckay1@btinternet.com

"That was Then" update on the three year Project 2008-2011

The target to involve a total of 24 schools in 3 years is well on course. We are now into phase 2. This involves making flyers and DVDs of the villages we have researched. One flyer -"Along The Turnpike Road from Streetgate to Byermoor" is finished and has been distributed free to local libraries, schools, churches, history societies, shops etc.

Those of us who have been involved with the school visits are highly impressed at the standard of behaviour, quality of questioning and the children's enthusiasm for the topic being explored. The staff of the schools have been most welcoming, enthusiastic and grateful for our contribution to their ongoing projects.

Margaret Minns, Project Leader, Whickham U3A Webwanderers, The Lead Partner, March 2010

Trustee's Report February 2010 – Joyce Watts

On 27th January we had a normal but brief Regional Meeting followed by a Third Age Trust meeting with two members of the NEC present, Ian Searle our chairman and Terry Hardy our treasurer. The Third Age Trust had funded the day.
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Ian Searle explained that he was anxious that there was no division between the NEC and U3As. He did not want a 'them and us' situation. He was aiming to reinforce the solidarity in the U3A movement.

Initially Terry spoke about financial matters of interest or concern to members with regard to the running of their individual U3As. Documents can be found detailing what Terry said on the U3A website entitled Handling Money and Payments and Frequently Asked Questions for Treasurers. Later he discussed the Regional Support Structure document. Briefly this document was recommending that the region seek TAT funding rather than the region charge a subscription from each U3A to fund the running of the region.

There was stimulated discussion and it was agreed with Terry that I would take a 'back of an envelope' budget to the next NEC meeting in February. This I did and he said that it 'looked good value for money' and promised to look at it more carefully.

The Regional Support Structure will be discussed at the next regional meeting, which will be our AGM on 6th May. I would, therefore, encourage you and your regional contacts to attend this meeting so that we can discuss it thoroughly and come to a decision as to the way forward.

At the last NEC meeting the Trustees were issued with an Executive Brief which is the Development Plan for 2010/11. The main goal is to increase substantially new U3A start-ups. There is a team in place, i.e. Mike Long, the NEDO, our EDO, Carol Millen and our own two EDCs, Margaret Minns and Joyce McKay. Margaret has been starting new U3As for a long time and would like to be relieved of some of her work load. If there is anyone who would like to become more involved in this very rewarding work please let me, Margaret or Joyce know. Mileage is paid by the TAT.

It has been agreed to have future conferences bi-annually. The AGM this year is to be held in Cirencester on the 9th September.

Scotland are having an All-Scotland Conference on 12th June 2010 in Edinburgh.

U3A News costs have been reduced. Just £1.20 for postage. Please encourage your members to take the magazine by direct mailing. This is the way everyone can keep in touch with what is going on nationally. An added bonus is receiving 'Sources' three times a year.

As well as Trustee I am also the Shared Learning Contact for the Region. It is likely that there will be some exciting projects coming up. If you are keen to do further research watch this space.

Joyce Watts, Northumbria Region Trustee

PLEASE NOTE: THE NEXT REGIONAL MEETING (& AGM) WILL NOW BE ON THURSDAY, 6TH MAY AT THE ANGEL INN, GATESHEAD. Coffee from 9.45 am