



What a year that was: your chairman looks back.

The good news is that Neston u3a can survive into 2023 thanks to Peter Bolderson stepping forward to take on the yet again vacant role of secretary. As you may know, without a secretary, treasurer, chairman or vice chairman, we cannot carry on and last year three secretaries had to resign in quick succession for different reasons. I feel sure that, with Peter in place, we can achieve some stability – and I can sleep at night.

We ended the year on a high note with our Christmas party on December 15th at the Civic Hall. I am always surprised and relieved to see so many volunteers appear on these occasions. Having arrived at the hall with a van load of food and drink, not to mention the Singing Group's keyboard, chairs etc, I was dreading having to carry everything up the icy steps to the hall. By the time I looked round, some fitter men than me - I am 84, you know - had lifted the lot in!

Inside the hall, volunteers were busy organising the food and drinks. Civic hall manager Rachel had arranged the tables and prepared everything for us in her welcoming way. Geoff's mulled wine was so popular, such a queue had formed, it delayed the start of Ann's barn dancing. Next was a Christmas selection of old favourites by Gemini singers Alison and Bernadette, a brilliant cabaret act that was followed by some more Christmas carols performed by our very own Singing for Fun Group to complete the afternoon's entertainment. Meanwhile Phil had been giving out the winnings in the lottery and finally we got the quiz answers from Kim. There was plenty to eat and drink and we all felt, as we emerged back into the frozen, strike-prone world outside, that we had escaped for a few hours of good company and great entertainment. To all those who made it such a success, my personal thanks. Let's do it again this year!

Michael Grumett

Trip to Bridgewater Gardens

After the horrendous heatwave, the 29th July dawned with a welcome drop in temperature. Such a relief as we boarded our coach to take us to the RHS



Bridgewater Gardens near Manchester. The whole area was much larger than I expected and I did wonder if anyone would get lost, however I need not have worried as we were greeted at the main entrance by two charming girls as soon as our coach pulled up outside the main door.

They told us a little about the place and handed out helpful leaflets.

The facilities were really something, extremely modern and quite impressive loos. (Maybe I don't get out enough or I am just not up to date.)

We started our walk through the meadow and partly around the lake, then back to the cafe where we sat in the sunshine to have lunch.



Duly refreshed, we headed for the walled garden. What a treat! It is beautiful and far better than expected as the plants were so mature they looked as though they had been planted years ago.



Our next call was the Chinese Rock garden and that too was lovely as you will see from Ron Bird's photos (thanks Ron).

Back to the cafe for a welcome cup of tea before the journey home. We all loved our day out.

Doreen and Dot

Bridgewater Gardens



Antiques and Collectables

The group has had a very active and enjoyable year. The last meeting of the year was a quiz, in fact 2 quizzes, produced by our antiques expert Lyn Ramsdale. The attached photo shows the winners of both quizzes with their tube of Smarties.

In addition to our monthly meetings the group intends to visit the 'Pure Brilliance: the Boodles Story' exhibit at the Lady Lever Art Gallery.

Liz Marrs



Luncheon Club

On 17 August we had our first post pandemic luncheon date. We dined at Pesto where, as always, the food was delicious and the service exemplary. Despite our small number the conversation flowed from putting the world to rights to humour. We even tried to convince Phill it would be a good idea to start up the quiz again. I did wonder if Chris may consider it!



Field Meeting of the Earth & Beyond Group

On 30th August fifteen members of the Geology Group that is part of the Earth and Beyond group met at Thurstaston Station on the Wirral Way and walked along the beach for a study of the till (the boulder clay cliffs left, eons ago, by successive ice sheets as each retreated.) One photo shows the Group, who collected, inspected and tested samples of the rocks found on the beach, which have origins in the Lake District or Scotland. The other photo shows Jim Marshall explaining the layering of the till.



Lyme Park Outing

October 3rd . After several wet days, I was beginning to watch the weather forecast with a certain amount of anxiety. (The weather is always my main concern when arranging these trips.) However, the day dawned bright and sunny and with assurance that it was going to stay that way for the rest of the day. Big sigh of relief. We assembled, as usual at the Glegg/Premier Inn car park to board our coach for a smooth uneventful journey to Lyme Park. We were greeted at the gate, which I am always pleased about, and shown to the coffee shop and facilities.



The hall itself is beautiful with

wonderful furniture and exquisite carvings on the walls. On the hour, in our case, 12 noon, we assembled in a lovely chapel for a most interesting talk about the history of Lyme and the Legh family who lived there for many years. The afternoon took us to the Orangery, where we sat in these lovely surroundings to eat our lunch. Then a walk around the gardens and time for a cup of tea before our journey home.

All agreed, it was a lovely day out.

Doreen and Dot



Ukrainian Arts

Many years ago there was a very fine, well-known Russian bass, Alexander Kipnis. I bought an LP of course. After listening to it for about 10 years, I at last got round to reading the sleeve notes and discovered that he wasn't Russian at all but Ukrainian.

Too late to hear him live, but not too late to be cheered by the news that the opera troupe of Dnipro, 'Dnipropetra' have, in the main, kept together and are now touring the west, even in the Wirral. They will be performing Aïda on Tuesday 14 February, 7.30 at the Floral Pavilion, New Brighton. The cost is £39. Members interested in sharing transport, contact me: Peter Koch. 0151 336 5393

The following is an extract from the TAM magazine, winter 2022. It's included here in case some of you haven't read or have forgotten about it. It's relevant to the theme of this newsletter, which is volunteering.

Volunteers must step up for u3a to survive by Barrie Gunter, Trustee and Executive Committee member of Epping Forest u3a

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Third Age Trust has done its best to lift spirits and provide advice about recruitment and participation. Nevertheless, many u3as have struggled to reach their pre-pandemic membership levels. Another continuing problem, having spoken with committee members of other u3as, is finding people willing to help to run their charity and its activities.

In its 'Our Vision' statement, the Third Age Trust has confirmed that members should play an active part in running the u3a movement. Yet, in my experience, most members I have talked to don't realise this. Many regard their local u3a simply as a provider of a range of established activity services which they have paid to join.

The notion of joining a wider movement – as mentioned by the vision statement – also has little traction with prospective new members. The ones I have spoken to often want to join for only one specific activity. If that activity turns out to be full, or even if it changes its location, they don't join.

The core principles of 'self-help learning' and 'mutual aid' indicate that members are invited to work together to make things happen.

A volunteering ethos is central to both of these principles. My experience is that this ethos is thin on the ground among most (90 per cent or more) people who join. Most members expect things to be done for them. Others don't join in with activities – especially those men who have been enrolled (reluctantly) by their wives.

This non-volunteering ethos can have damaging consequences. When a group convener steps down, after many years of loyal service, more often than not the group will end because no other group members will want to take over, even though they know how it runs.

We need to dispel common external notions that the u3a offers 'classes' or is run by permanent 'tutors'. Instead, maybe we should frame the u3a as offering settings in which retired people can meet with others by attending, supporting and helping to run current activities and creating new ones that meet their mutual interests.

Let's not be afraid to acknowledge why the u3a was developed and, importantly, of what we need from our members to survive.

Walking Group

14 members of the Walking Group set off from Mostyn Square, Parkgate for their December walk. We headed down the Parade, past the old Mostyn School and worked our way through to Moorside Lane before turning along Old Quay Lane to pick up the footpath to the Wirral Way. We then headed back towards Parkgate, crossed Station Road and continued along the Wirral Way as far as Backwood Hall Bridge. Having climbed the steps and crossed over the bridge we walked down to the Boathouse Lane car park, pausing long enough for a group photo (including the watching bear) and then back along the Parade.



After 3.5 miles we felt we had earned scrumptious mince pies, liquid refreshment and convivial chat with fellow walkers at Victoria's Sandwich.

Hilary

Concert and Opera-going group

Group members have had a thrilling autumn with 3 operas and 5 symphony concerts. During the musical year Sept 2022 - July 2023, the first part of the season was always seen by me as the most interesting. But I was disappointed that so few of us took advantage of the visit of Glyndebourne Opera to Liverpool. Having just moved here I felt elated when I heard of their visits to and the ease with which we Nestonians can get there to see/hear them. I was a little surprised to meet u3a members who didn't know of our group's organising of outings and the advantages of us sharing transport. For the moment, with so many strikes affecting public and private transport, I am having a pause for a few weeks.

Any member who hasn't registered their interest in this group, can easily do so by passing me their details: namely their email address and telephone number.

Peter Koch: peterkochuk36@gmail.com / 0151 366 5393

Editor's bit

Happy New Year (belated but sincere). We've all been through the wringer over the last couple of years, what with the covid, the flu, the economy, Ukraine, strikes and all the rest of it. But let us not be despondent – we're British, dammit! We can cope and deal with whatever life throws at us and we should all stick together and help each other out.

And that brings me neatly to the subject of volunteering (see extract from article in TAM). Our u3a needs you! You can see from Michael's introduction that, as a registered charity, we can't function without certain committee members. It's the law. The thing is, if any one of us has to drop out for whatever reason (we seem to be going through secretaries like a dose of salts) we're in a very precarious state. We've been on the verge of having to fold up the whole shebang quite a few times of late. Do you want to see that happen? So this is an appeal for anybody with a couple of hours a month to spare to come forward and offer some help. You don't need to be a smart-arse or have any particular skills, just a willingness to help out. We'll find you something useful to do! We're currently looking for a minutes secretary because Peter has sight problems and isn't able to take notes. I'm doing it at the moment but I can't always be available. You just have to write down topics discussed at committee meetings (once a month) and email them to Peter. Not difficult.

I hope you all had a lovely Christmas, If anybody has leftover pressies that you're not sure you really want, please think about handing them over to Kenny for the raffle.

Material for the newsletter or the monthly bulletin can be sent to me at any time. You don't need to be a group leader, any member with anything to say is more than welcome to contribute. The more the merrier.

Stay healthy and happy.

With best wishes from Shelagh Editor@nestonu3a.org.uk

Treasurer's Report for Neston u3a December 2022 Meeting

Catering: £193.08 / Donation: £11.96 / Loss on Lottery: £4.00

Total: £185.12 A total of 111 tickets were sold at £222.00

There is also an unknown cost at this time for the table decorations removed from the Civic Hall for which we will be invoiced along with the fee for the hire of the Hall. I have not included the £50 paid to the Charles Thompson Mission on behalf of singing duo 'Gemini' as we would normally pay for a speaker.