

Connect

West Midlands Region

Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire.

u3a learn,
laugh,
live

MARCH ISSUE 2021

IS YOUR U3A READY?

So, did you get a chance to pop into the Regional Conference last week? Ian McCannah and Professor Janet Lord were the main attractions but we also had great feedback about the cookery demonstration, belly dancing and relaxation sessions. A few IT glitches spoilt the flow, but with true determination, the show carried on and all the afternoon speakers had a voice. The main aim was to energize and encourage u3a members for the challenges facing our movement, and judging by the chat and the faces on the screens, West Midlands u3as are ready for the challenge. And the challenge is a serious one – most u3as are currently reporting an average loss of membership around 20%, with quite a few u3as still hibernating, with no online activities. If the country sticks with the current roadmap, our u3as should have the opportunity of face to face meetings from the Summer onwards.



Is your u3a ready?

Allan Walmsley, Trustee, W Midlands

WED 2 JUNE: NATIONAL U3A DAY

Should it go ahead or be postponed? There are arguments on both sides but the decision is, it's happening. And if most u3as take part, we should make a national impact. Plan activities for later in the year if you wish but try to **announce them on 2 June**.

See the u3a day webpage and Facebook group for more info and start planning now!

PS. Read on for more info about Exploring World Faiths week - our first Regional Subject Week.



**Book your
place on
Exploring
World Faiths
12-18 April**



BANK SCAMS: TAKE ACTION NOW!

In the last fortnight - two u3as have been scammed by phone calls purporting to be from their bank's Fraud Department. Other u3as have reported similar attempted scams.

What do they say?

The fraudsters have extensive knowledge of Committee names and the bank details. They say that a number of large, suspicious transactions are pending, due to take place from your account and that action must be taken – that they will talk you through – to prevent them. They may also encourage you to make a transfer of your funds to a “safe” account. They may quote a bank contact number which is genuine but they are masking the number they are actually calling from.

What should I do?

Hang Up! Banks do not make calls of this nature. If you follow their instructions you are likely to lose all the u3a funds. The fraudsters are very convincing and well organised, they pressure you that time is of essence. They know what to say to allay any misgivings you have. If you try to call your bank to check if the call was genuine the fraudsters can intercept your call and convince you to continue. **If you do call your bank on a number you know to be genuine use a different phone or wait before calling. Inform your Treasurer, and anyone involved in your u3as banking of this.** The fraudsters have so far taken almost £50,000 from u3a and personal accounts. They are targeting u3as, have been successful and will try again – your u3a could be next. **Take all personal details off your u3a website as this appears to be a source of their information.**

Support and Advice: Contact [Barclays Digital Wings address](#). You don't have to bank with Barclays.

Sign up—and when asked, your code is U3A (all caps). Keep safe!

RETAIN & RECRUIT U3A MEMBERS

A Working Party of members from 65 u3as has produced 35 tools to help with the retention and recruitment campaign.

There are papers, presentations & videos, showing how a bit of thought & lateral thinking can help u3as to stem & reverse reductions in membership and adjust an ageing profile.

The Toolkit is on the main u3a website under the **Sources Online** section.

FIRST REGIONAL SUBJECT WEEK 12 APRIL

Our first Regional Subject Week will be **Exploring World Faiths**, starting the week beginning 12 April 2021.

Dr Peter Rookes, National Subject Adviser for Exploring World Faiths, says, “We are fortunate in the West Midlands in having such an abundance and diversity of faiths: there are over 650 places of worship in Birmingham alone. If you'd like to know more about what people of different faiths believe and are a member of a u3a in the West Midlands, you're invited to join us on Zoom.”

Each day, 10am -11.30 we'll consider 2 faiths as follows:

Monday 12 April -	Introduction and Christianity;
Tuesday 13 April -	Islam and Christian Science
Wednesday 14 April -	Hinduism and Buddhism
Thursday 15 April -	Baha'I and Sikh
Friday 16 April -	Judaism and Scientology.

Please join us! To register for the various sessions during Exploring World Faiths Week, [click HERE](#)



How To Age Well? - Tonight | ITV News with Martin Kemp

U3A DEMONSTRATES HEALTHY AGEING

Short and sweet – but perhaps it made the point” said Allan Walmsley after the appearance of WM u3a members on ITV’s Tonight programme **Healthy Ageing** on Thurs 11 March.

Interviewed by musician/actor Martin Kemp, and including Sam Mauger, CEO of u3a, the main message was that the u3a movement provides an opportunity for us to stay fit, stay learning and stay socially engaged – all areas that contribute to healthy ageing. References to the u3a may have been limited but every second of exposure on national media raises u3a’s profile.

Re PUBLICITY: Do you have any interesting members or former celebrities in your u3a? Why not see if they have a story to tell?

Is there anything interesting or unusual going on in your u3a? The u3a Communications team is always looking for a good story.

Contact u3a Communications:
elizabeth.drury@u3a.org.uk / eleonor.mair@u3a.org.uk

PS. If you have experience of journalism, media or PR, and are interested in improving communications in the WM Region, contact me, Allan Walmsley, Trustee .

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PR WITH U3A

Join the 'PR Links and u3a day' LIVE Zoom events on March 26th and 31st .

Find out how your u3a group can create great publicity, ask questions.

Click the link below for more info and to book your place

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/pr-links-and-u3a-day-tickets-143953305211>

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY:

The Third Age Trust AGM will held on Thursday 26 August . It will be online or a hybrid depending on Covid rules at the time.

Does your u3a want to propose a resolution?

Here is your chance. Notification and Minutes available [HERE](#)

SCAM ALERT

To read the latest advice on how to avoid being cheated by online and other fraudsters, click [HERE](#)

GET THE NATIONAL U3A NEWSLETTER!

Sign up [here](#)

It's a great way of finding out what's going on in u3as across the country: **you can copy all the best ideas!**

NATIONAL NETWORK WEEK 14-18 June

Will review the role of networks in u3a: more info soon.

2021 ANNUAL RETURN Reminder

EM-21-03 has been sent to all u3a Secretaries. u3as need to declare the number of paid up members on March 31st 2021. Let the office or your Regional Trustee know if you have any problems.

MODEL CONSTITUTION

The **new** Model Constitution has arrived and is available on the main u3a website under **Support For u3as/ Document Downloads.** Look for Document

REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR

Hello! I've recently retired from a long career in IT and have now volunteered to help the Region promote the wider use of technology. We aim to do this by:

1. Coordinating with the u3a centre, and other regions, to understand and help to implement technologies and support opportunities that may be useful to us in our Region.
2. Identifying technology success stories and best practice across our Region, so that we can promote and share what works best.
3. Developing the online tools section of our Regional website to give information about tools available, and how to use them.

None of this will work without support, so I also aim to build a **network of technology support personnel from across the region.** This support will range from help in understanding and implementing technologies, to finding solutions to detailed technical queries.



To date we have a team of 3, Jackie Johnson from Kings Norton at District u3a, Jean Jackson from Lichfield u3a and me. Jackie will initially focus on smart phone support and Facebook – but we'll tackle whatever we can!

If you have expertise in online tools and you're interested in joining the Regional Tech Support Team then please get in touch.

Glynn Emery Much Wenlock u3a

Email: U3awmts1@gmail.com

LATEST U3A RADIO PODCAST

Episode 6 of the u3a radio podcast has a history theme.

It features stories from u3a members about their experiences of the [Battle of Britain and the Blitz](#),

an interview with the [u3a Egyptology Subject Advisor](#)

and the team find out more about a [Speaker Swap](#) that's been happening across u3a British History groups.

[Listen to the episode HERE](#) and find all our previous episodes on [the u3a YouTube channel](#).

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

Volunteers keep u3a going – and we appreciate everything you do. But just in case you'd consider doing something more, there is a range of opportunities that you could consider — or perhaps recommend to a friend?

Nationally, you could attend the next Volunteer Coffee Morning to find out more. We're also seeking Trust Volunteers who might want to become expert in start-ups, facilitation, training, or join in u3a national projects.

The u3a depends on experienced members who are willing to advise, support, or just pitch in.

There's also opportunity to become part of the Region's Team. Email Allan Walmsley, Trustee, to discuss what you would like to do; we value all contributions.

In the Region we're aiming to run some **Subject Weeks** that all local u3a members can join in, starting with **Exploring World Faiths Week, 12-16 April**. We'd welcome help with that and other subject weeks.

We're also looking at the role and structure of the WM website, to make it more useful to groups in the Region - let us know what you think. Could you contribute?

CALLING ALL u3a CHAIRS IN W MIDLANDS

Every Friday, I hold a "Fireside Chat", a very informal Zoom session where Chairs exchange their news and views about u3a. If you're a Chair and haven't come along yet, please email me and I'll send you an invitation.

If you want to contribute to one of our newsletters, if you'd like to know more about any of the items featured

OR if you just want to say hello, email allan.walmsley@u3a.org.uk



STRUGGLING TO SET UP YOUR AGM ONLINE?

Help is at hand!

There are tutorials on the main u3a website & we'll publish guidance on the Regional site: take a look.

FEEDBACK ON REGIONAL CONFERENCE

If you have any comments about the recent WMidlands Region Conference or ideas for future conferences, let us know by clicking [HERE](#)

PROF. JANET LORD,
Director of the Institute of Inflammation and Ageing,



University of Birmingham was one of our speakers at the Regional Conference.

Find her presentation & more on the Regional website: [here](#).