

Northumbria Region u3a

The Messenger

Newsletter – Magazine for January 2022



u3a Takeover Day

Experience is not what
happens to a man.
It is what a man does
with what happens to
him.

Aldous Huxley

Chair's Message for January 2022

This time last year we were tentatively looking forward to opening up again as the pandemic appeared to be abating, but it has taken until now, possibly with the Omicron variant having reached its peak, some u3as are gathering in well-ventilated places with hope for the future.

However, Zoomers are still Zooming and more and more hybrid meetings are being set up for the benefit of those who still need to protect themselves but want to join in.

The Hybrid Meetings Working Group has had many requests, some of them have travelled to the extremities of the region to assess venues and help set up the equipment for hosting meetings on-line and live

The short term working group idea has proved very popular with people, as it means they only need commit their time for a while. It's much easier to do that than to see far into the future. Responsibility for taking the decisions does not rest with the Working Group. They do all the investigations and the hard work, and then make recommendations to be decided on by the Trustees. The latest has been the Jesmond u3a Legacy funding for IT equipment. One WkGp decided on the questions which should be asked on the grant application form, and another is following up the applications as I write this. So, we have seven more people to thank for helping out with the running of the region.

We published a list in the Messenger last July of members who had been involved in Working Groups so far, so watch out for your name appearing next time, if you join in with any of the up and coming opportunities. I have to say, the volunteers are also very much appreciated by members of the Regional Committee, as it helps reduce our work-load.

Needless to say, if you are one who is willing to help out on a longer term basis, we will be looking for nominations for committee before the AGM in April..! I finish my turn as Chair then.

I hope to see you at our January Quarterly. Will this be the last one we have to hold on Zoom? I'd like to believe we will be able to go live, can have the April meeting in a real venue, and be able to chat with each other over lunch. That's such a welcome thought.

Happy New Year to all.

Mo Brown

P.S. Have you seen the [Networks Newsletter](#)? We have a photo contribution taken by Kelvin at the Great North Museum – Hancock Event of Alexa and me having a giggle – probably relief that everybody had arrived safely and were busily involved in one of the activities put on by the Museum staff.

Sewing and Knitting Class 2021

Four volunteers from Wearside u3a agreed to run a sewing class as part of the Summer Programme at Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre at the request of the centre manager. This was the first time they had run such a programme and so everyone was on a learning curve. The session was scheduled to run from 11am to 1 pm on Wednesdays for 4 weeks, however, as lunch was scheduled for 12.30, we had to be flexible and encourage the participants to finish earlier than expected. Starting became flexible too with children joining us when they arrived until the class was full. Whilst we initially planned to have any member of the families participating, the adults only came in to see what the children were doing and for a brief chat – not easy as their English was sometimes not enough to express themselves.

We were set up in the training room with the other activities happening in the main hall. For good air flow the windows and door were open, so we could hear the times when excitement



caused a thunderous response to what was xgoing on in the hall – table tennis every day; boxing, games, music, icing cupcakes and also a lot of crafting activities. The children chose what they wanted to do but we asked that only the older children came into our class or we would have to reduce the numbers to one child per adult.

The recruitment of volunteers to work on the project was not across the whole of the u3a but rather limited to those who had been working together at the Wild Patch Community Garden throughout the pandemic. Even so planning beforehand was tricky due to other commitments and holidays away as well as the uncertainty about the composition of the families signing up to participate. By word of mouth, we had fabric, trimmings, sewing sundries, yarn and knitting needles donated and/or loaned. Needles, felt, needle threaders and short knitting needles were purchased with variable delivery times at a total cost of £24.

Of 15 children who signed into the class seven attended once, two attended twice and four attended all four sessions. This was not necessarily due to them not wanting to attend as we were constantly turning children away who wanted



to join in once the class was full. On one occasion a volunteer stayed late to work xan extra hour with two sisters who had been asking to attend since the previous day but had not arrived in time to do so. All children attending more than one class chose whether they were knitting or sewing that session. At the end of each class all uncompleted work was put in a named bag should they want to work more on it when they next attended. They could take completed projects home. It would have been nice to be able to send their knitting home with them to practice but we had been told not to allow them to take knitting needles away with them due to health and safety concerns. Those who attended four sessions did both

sewing and knitting. No knitting projects were completed. Sewing projects included: - felt needle cases, fabric stuffed hearts, felt brooches, and chicken pin cushions. It wasn't only girls who took up the opportunity. We did have one boy join the last session who did really well with his sewing project and completed his pincushion. His stitching was good as well.

Challenges included the uncertainty of what our aims were and that none of the participants had any experience of knitting. Some said they'd done some sewing but in reality, we had to start with threading the needle and tying a knot in the

end and provide crib sheets of the basic stitches (mind you, the fact that on a University Challenge program none of the students was able to identify basic embroidery stitches was a shock to us). The lack of dexterity when holding the knitting needles could possibly be attributed to the lack of penmanship nowadays required at school but was the centre of much discussion between us and with our friends.

Benefits were the look on a child's face when they achieved their first independent knitting stitch, or finished a whole row. The parents expressed delight when popping in to see what was happening. The children were as thrilled as we were when they completed a sewing project. The real accolade was in our final session when two of the children when approached by a sibling to join in the boxing class refused preferring to continue with what they were doing.

Unfortunately, we were not able to agree to continue the class on Saturday mornings as requested by parents due to other commitments.

Christa Lloyd - Wearside u3a

Christmas Tree Festival

Sedgefield and District u3a were one of the 38 local organisations and businesses who participated in the recent Christmas Tree Festival in their local Parish Church. Originally scheduled to take place during the first week in December only, we were eventually allowed to leave the trees in place until Twelfth Night during which time many more visitors and churchgoers were able to enjoy and admire the exhibits and marvel at the ingenuity, imagination and hard work which had taken place to create them

Our pop-up Craft Interest Group met three times in October and November, and spent countless hours in between, knitting, crocheting, sewing, cutting, winding, twirling, gluing and foraging to make over 150 items to decorate our tree in the given theme **'It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas.'** We'd decided to do a sort of deconstructed Advent Calendar; imagining all the items which could be

found behind the doors of the calendar 'escaping' to an adjacent Christmas tree! So, four to six of each of at least 24 items were created. Colourful, kitsch and completely Christmassy it totally fulfilled the brief!



We had great fun decorating our tree and were delighted with our 2nd Prize which was awarded by Pam Royle, the ITV News presenter. We're already looking forward to the next event in a couple of years!

And, to gild the lily, over £2,600 was raised in appreciative donations. This will be shared by the church and the local Girl Guide troop.

Christine Balfour – Sedgefield and District u3a

U3a Takeover Day



Cecilia Coulson (u3a Takeover Day Working Group Chair) and Mo Brown (u3a Northumbria Chair) presented u3a-branded Travel Mugs, as a memento of the event, to Joanne Charlton (Platinum Programme, Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums) and Ruth Sheldon (Public Engagement Project Co-ordinator, Great North Museum).

Over seventy u3a members, from across the region, attended the first face-to-face Northumbria u3a event in a long time, "u3a Takeover Day" at the Great North Museum in Newcastle.

Participants could choose to visit the Planetarium (open for the first time, post Covid-19), study gemstones and make their own creations using 'fake' gemstones, handle and learn about tools discovered in local archaeological digs, sketch North East birds and animals to a background of recorded birdsong, discuss the 'decolonisation' of Egyptian artefacts and complete a quiz to learn about the Natural History Society of Northumbria.

Kelvin Rushworth – Public Relations Adviser

Stockton Flyer

I'm sure members are aware of Stockton's historic connection with the railways of this country, but how many of you have heard of the Stockton Flyer?



‘What is it?’, I hear you ask.

Well, it's an installation in our High Street which commemorates just that – our railways – with a moving, noisy, smokey, whistle blowing train which comes up out of a grey stone plinth every day at 1 pm. The whole model is a stylized version of George and Robert Stephenson's engine Locomotion 1.

The Flyer was designed and built by Rob Higgs, a sculptor based in Cornwall, whose design won the most votes from the people of the town in a competition run by the council. It was unveiled in June 2016 as part of the Queen's official 90th birthday celebrations.

If you are ever in Stockton High Street around one o'clock in the afternoon, you will see a huddle of people standing about waiting for it to appear, taking

photographs and videos of its show and eagerly talking to children and grandchildren all about it. It's another item in the regeneration of our High Street, much in the news, which is getting underway as we speak. In 2022 we will see the start of the riverside park project which will change completely the south side of the High Street, but that's another story!

Patricia Marcus – Stockton u3a

Calling all Groups Co-ordinators in Northumbria u3as...

Do you know about the support network for Northumbria Groups Coordinators? We meet on Zoom, roughly monthly, on different days of the week so that no-one is always ruled out. The meetings are very informal, with plenty of time to discuss any issues or problems raised by the attendees – and there have been plenty of those over the past couple of years, leaving aside all the questions about our role in normal times! There's always a Trust Volunteer and often our Regional Trustee in attendance, to clarify any issues pertaining to the national u3a guidance or rules; and the experience of the Groups Coordinators present is often invaluable for suggesting ideas to try that have worked for others. Notes are circulated after each meeting to everyone on our list, whether or not they attended. Some attend almost every time, others less frequently, and a few have never been to a meeting but still like to receive the notes. If this interests you, contact the secretary on u3a.prudhoe@gmail.com for an invitation to the next meeting and to receive the notes. You can of course cancel at any time. What do you have to lose?

There's also an online Google Group which acts as a Groups Co-ordinators' forum. Any Co-ordinator wanting to join the forum needs an invitation from its 'Owner', Fliss Hill, email fliss_hill@yahoo.co.uk.

If you're not the Groups Coordinator for your u3a, please do mention this to them. Thank you.

Kathy Clegg, Prudhoe & District u3a



The Hadrian's Wall Festival website has been launched ([Home - Hadrian's Wall 1900 \(hadrianswallcountry.co.uk\)](https://www.hadrianswallcountry.co.uk)). The purpose of the website is to provide a central place to signpost visitors to all Festival activities. From this month, the website will start to promote Activity Organisers' events via the Visit Hadrian's Wall social media channels to share what we are all getting up to over coming months.

Northumbria u3a plans to organise two celebratory regional events ...

- Amazing Arbeia, at South Shields, in the Spring
- u3a Walks the Wall, all along the Wall, in the Autumn.

Watch out for further details on the Northumbria u3a website and in Northumbria u3a Events Mailings.

Kelvin Rushworth - u3a Wooler
Chair, Northumbria u3a Events Sub-Committee

Raising the profile of u3a

To retain, increase and diversify the membership of our u3as, generally, the profile of our wonderful organisation needs to be raised – especially in 2022, the 40th Anniversary of the launch of the u3a movement.

A number of years ago, when I agreed to start a u3a Wooler newsletter, I felt that there was little need for an internal members' newsletter. In a small u3a, like Wooler (with less than 130 members) members are involved in several groups. Monthly meetings, pre-Covid, were well attended and the chat was lively! In a small market town like Wooler, members see each other frequently in the High Street, in the Co-op, in the Post Office queue, at community and church activities and events. In short, members are well-informed about u3a news, events and activities.



So, I decided to launch a quarterly e-bulletin exclusively for the many external organisations and contacts in the area. Copies are emailed to specific individuals for them to distribute to their own networks (eg Parish Council Clerks to their Councillors, Patient Participation Groups to their members, relevant charities and community groups to their Trustees, Church leaders to the key members of their congregations, the two GP Practice Managers in the Health Centre to their staff, Ageing Well Network and Glendale Connect members).

In addition, copies are emailed directly to the local County Councillor, Director of Public Health, Police and Crime Commissioner, MP, North of Tyne Mayor, Lords Joicey and Beith etc.

The u3a Wooler venue for Monthly Meetings and most groups is the old village workhouse, converted into the splendid Cheviot Centre. Copies of the e-bulletin are sent to the building managers (Glendale Gateway Trust Trustees and CEO), to the other occupants (including the Northumbria Police office, a building society branch, the tourist information centre, the branch library and a number of small businesses in the adjoining 'pods').

Currently, and for the last six years, the u3a Wooler external e-bulletin has a growing readership of 2,500 – incredible for a relatively small rural community.

Kelvin Rushworth - Publicity Officer, u3a Wooler



Northumbria Region u3a Treasurers' Network

Now in its fourth year, the numbers attending this group continue to increase and we are continuing to support each other as well as members who are new to the role or thinking about becoming a treasurer.

If you'd like to attend the March 2022 meeting, please refer to the Northumbria u3a website and 'Networks' page or contact me at newcastleu3a@hotmail.com. You will be very **welcome**.

If members are shadowing you and considering taking over your role, they are also welcome. We now have a member from the London Region who is keen to learn from us and share good practice.

SE Northumberland and the Coast Chairs' and Business Secretaries' Network

This is another thriving network in our region. The topics vary according to members' requests but we are never short of anything to discuss!

Any chair, vice chair or business secretary is welcome or any member considering taking on one of these roles.

For further information, please refer to the Northumbria Region u3a website or contact me at newcastleu3a@hotmail.com

Catherine Stevenson - Chair Newcastle u3a



u3a
40th Anniversary



Kelvin Rushworth, Public Relations Adviser (North East England)
kelvinregnat@outlook.com

u3a UK 40th Anniversary Events

Round Table Discussion: May

About the original u3a Vision and whether/how this has changed will be recorded and made available, 40 years after the first u3a was established at the Easter School in 1982. Participants will include Eric Midwinter (the remaining Founding Father).

Anniversary Quilt 'reveal': June

Any individual member, interest group or u3a has been eligible to enter an Anniversary Quilt competition (deadline was November 2021) to create blocks for a 40th anniversary quilt on the topic of Positive Ageing. The completed quilt will be revealed on Wednesday 1 June.

u3a Picnic in the Park: June

Over the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend (Thursday 2 – Sunday 5 June), u3as will be encouraged to hold picnics (in a park, on a beach, in a woodland, in a street, on a hill, beside a lake etc) to celebrate not just the Queen's Jubilee but also the u3a's 40th birthday.

'Open for Business': July

A Webinar will be held on the u3a High Street project, which will promote the results of surveys - carried out by over five hundred u3a members - of High Streets across the UK and describe the changes which have occurred over a 12-month period.

'Futures, Foresight and Horizon Scanning': July

The u3a Science Network will host an anniversary meeting in July to highlight u3a scientific activities and take the opportunity to engage the scientific community.

'Positive Futures in Older Age': August

This project started between u3a Edinburgh and the University of Stirling to demonstrate the impact older people can have on the community. Short stories will be collected from members from which plays will be written and performed at the Edinburgh Fringe and a London theatre.

u3a UK AGM: October

A hybrid streamed event on Thursday 6, to show how the profile of u3a locally, regionally, nationally and UK-wide can be raised further in the next 40 years.

u3a Wood 'reveal': November

The u3a Wood was launched in September 2021 with the intention that u3as would plant 5,000 trees as a contribution to the environment and the community. The wood will be 'revealed' in Tree Week, 17 - 25 November, showing how many trees have been planted by u3a members.

Regional Committee July 2021 - 2022	
Chair	Mo BROWN, Wooler
Vice Chairman	Cecilia COULSON, Whickham and District
Business and Minute Secretary	Mary BARLOW, Sunderland
Treasurer	Mike WALLACE, Newcastle
Member	Ann CARR, Bishop Auckland
Member	Malcom WILKINSON, Seaham Harbour
Member	Peter BARNETT, Wessington
Trustee for the North East	Sandi RICKERBY, Morpeth

Members of the committee can be contacted by email through the website:
<https://u3asites.org.uk/northumbria>

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regionalU3Alist@gmail.com

If you wish to receive information by post, contact your own u3a committee's regional contact for the postal address.

You can unsubscribe anytime.

From the Editor.

May I thank everyone who has taken the time to provide articles and assistance for this edition of The Messenger. I do hope that you have enjoyed reading this issue and that it has given you inspiration for the future. Please forward your articles to regnewseditor@gmail.com May I please have all contributions for the next edition in by Sunday 10th April 2022. Thank you.