

Melton Mowbray U3A

A Brief History of the U3A

The original scheme on which the U3A is based started in Toulouse, France in 1972. There, local groups were to be organised and managed by local universities, with the emphasis very much on continued academic learning. When Peter Laslett, a Cambridge University academic, first hosted a meeting in 1981 with the intention of starting up a similar scheme in the UK, he firmly rejected this model and, instead, proposed that local groups of people should get together to learn what interested them, with group leaders who would co-ordinate and guide their efforts.

The first formal meeting was in March 1982 in Cambridge and this led to the creation of the first U3A in Cambridge. The newly-formed Cambridge committee also became the first National committee, as they started to spread the word and, using funding provided by the Nuffield Foundation, they started to create a national base. Within a year, U3A's had opened up in various parts of the country, and the first national magazine was published in September 1983. The magazine was entitled "The Last Post". Unsurprisingly, this did not go down well, and was rapidly re-named for later editions. From these early beginnings, the U3A movement has spread throughout the UK, and the UK model has been adopted in various parts of the World, including Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Cyprus.

By the end of 2014 there were well over 950 U3A's in the UK, with more than 340,000 members. Individual U3A membership numbers ranged from 12 to 2,000 at the end of 2014. On average, approximately 50 new U3A's start up each year in the UK. Each U3A is an autonomous body but they are all members of the Third Age Trust, which acts as an "umbrella" organisation, giving advice and assistance as needed. Each U3A is expected to adhere to the Third Age Trust Guiding Principles, which can be accessed via the link on the Melton Mowbray U3A Website.

For more information about the early beginnings of the U3A, "The U3A Story" by Frances Beckett is recommended reading, and is available free, online, and there is a hardcopy edition in the MM U3A archive.

The U3A in Melton Mowbray

The following is based on such documented history as we currently have in our own archive material.

In 1995, Margaret Butler decided to try to set up a U3A group in Melton Mowbray and got in touch with the development body within the national University of the Third Age. In October 1995, Roy Wilson, the national development co-ordinator, wrote to Margaret to advise her on how to organise a local U3A, and offered a small start-up grant of £30, plus support material such as letterheads, posters, etc. and the details of nearby U3A organisations.

Roy confirmed that in October 1995, there were already some 300 U3A's in the UK with a total membership of approximately 47,000.

Margaret contacted Alan Nutt of Age Concern, Melton and Kathy McKinlay of the CVS, and they gave help and advice. The initial public meeting was held at Gloucester House on 20th March 1996 and over 50 people attended. Margaret chaired the meeting and representatives of the Loughborough U3A Branch addressed the meeting. Following this meeting, the Melton U3A was created, a steering committee was formed, and officers appointed.

The first full meeting of the newly-formed Melton U3A was held on 18th April 1996, and the main speakers were Vic and Joan Dixon, talking about their trip to New Zealand. Members were informed about the groups that were already up and running: Watercolour painting, (Leader, Cynthia Wainwright), Calligraphy, (Peter Wainwright), Music, (John Duckworth), Scrabble, (Gwen Pearce), Rambling, (Gordon & Enid Young), Local History/Ambling, (John Plumb). Also in the pipeline were Bridge for Beginners and Gardens & Gardening. At this meeting, all groups were busy making arrangements for meeting together, and members were invited to contact the new Chairman, (Margaret) for details.

The next meeting was held on 16th May 1996, at Gloucester House, and the Committee membership was confirmed as follows:

Chairman:	Margaret Butler
Secretary:	Mary Wilson
Membership Secretary:	Len Pearce
Committee Member:	Gordon Young

with Alan Nutt and Kathy McKinlay appointed as advisors.

The first newsletter was issued in May 1996, in which it was confirmed that annual £10 subscriptions were now due, to be collected by Len Pearce, plus details of the various groups that were up and running. Committee membership details were included in the newsletter, plus information about the following month's meeting, 20th June, 1996.

Our archives contain a membership list, as at 16th May 1996, with some 70 names on it. As at May 2015, some 16 of the original members are still members of the MM U3A.

In 1999, Mary Wilson was in poor health, and, because of her initial set-up work with Margaret Butler, the committee agreed to appoint her as our first Life Member. Margaret was subsequently made a life member as well.

An extract from the Melton Times, 2 November 2000, includes an article with John Duckworth, the Chairman at the time, in which he discussed the U3A and confirmed that, at that time, we had more than 250 members. He discussed a plan for some 20 members to be trained in the gathering of oral history, and they would then interview Melton people and make permanent records of things that happened during the 1930's and 1940's. This would take place over a 2 year period, with the findings being published in 2002. This had been organised by Bournemouth University, and, eventually,

approximately 12 of our members were trained and interviewed employees at Holwell Works, the Melton Woodyard and various agricultural enterprises, an archive was made and a copy was given to the Melton Mowbray Museum.

The original Constitution of the Melton U3A, (so-called to reflect that membership was open to all members of the Borough, and not just the Town) was based on the National Model Constitution and was signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Melton U3A on 9th July 1996, and formally adopted at the AGM in March 1997. (This Constitution remained in force until March 2013, when a revised version was adopted at the AGM. However, the original Constitution remains the basis of the existing version as only minor, "tidying-up", alterations were required).

In November 2005, after much discussion, the name of our U3A was changed to the Melton Mowbray U3A.

In February 2005, Gordon Young, an original member of both the Melton U3A and the first Committee, was elected to the position of Chairman of the East Midlands Association of U3A's. Then, on 3rd May 2011, Gordon was elected to the Third Age Trust Roll of Honour. At the end of 2014 there were only 47 names on the Roll, out of some 340,000 plus members.

On 16th March 2006, the monthly meeting celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the formation of our U3A. The meeting was addressed by John Plumb, leader of the History Group and the MM U3A Lectern was presented to the Branch, which had been carved and turned by Len Pearce, Gordon Young and Mick Hirst, all members of the Wood and Metalwork Craft Group. Over a 3 day period, the U3A Groups held an exhibition in St Mary's Church in Melton Mowbray, and the U3A Singers gave a concert. Winifred Maine, the Chairman at the time, planted a tree at the rear of the Baptist Church, and the tree continues to thrive, with a plaque attached to it which identifies the occasion and the species of tree, a *Sorbus hupehensis* which is a member of the Rowan family.

The Melton Mowbray U3A was registered as a charity in its' own right on 3rd September 2010.

Since these early days, the membership has increased to approximately 630 members, and there are some 70 + activity groups now operating successfully. We have seen some groups fall by the wayside, new ones take their place, and, occasionally, old groups have been resurrected. The original 4 member committee has, over the years, been replaced by a committee with 4 officers, (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary & Treasurer), plus 7 "portfolio" members who look after the newsletter, co-ordinate the groups, look after our IT requirements, organise monthly speakers, arrange frequent outings, ensure annual member renewals and facilitate new members joining, and, most importantly, ensure that accurate Minutes are taken of all committee deliberations.

During the lifetime of the U3A in the UK, a number of regional initiatives have taken place, with County-based Regions being set up throughout the country. The Melton Mowbray U3A is part of a Region called the Association of East Midlands U3A's, which includes Leicestershire and Rutland, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Northamptonshire.

The Association has a number of roles, including provision of educational and recreational opportunities for all members, helping in the growth of the movement throughout the region, assisting U3A's with local issues and providing a communication conduit between U3A's and the Third Age Trust.

In November 2002, an initial meeting was organised for all U3A's in Leicestershire, with a view towards setting up a more "local" grouping, and this led to the formation of the Leicestershire Neighbourhood. We now have 3 Neighbourhood meetings each year, attended by 2 or 3 committee members of almost all of the Leicestershire U3A's, and these meetings result in mutual assistance between U3A's and the organising of educational and recreational events which can be shared by members of the Neighbourhood.

The membership has not merely functioned in and around Melton Mowbray, in monthly meetings and in the groups, but has also participated in group holidays across the UK and into Germany, France, Holland and Belgium. Social Group outings have taken members to such places as Port Sunlight, Blenheim Palace and Woburn Abbey and the Theatre Group regularly visits theatres in neighbouring cities and London. The Singing Group performed for a variety of charitable causes and sang in Peterborough Cathedral on two occasions and also performed in such diverse locations as Nottingham, Grantham, Loughborough and even in Belvoir Castle and Harlaxton Manor. The Guitar Group has performed in a variety of venues and has raised money for charity. One Guitar Group highlight was the serenading of the 2012 Olympic Torch procession as it passed through the area. Members have also participated in local events such as the annual Christmas Tree Festival in St. Mary's Church, and the Borough Council's Information for the Elderly days.

During the 19 years since our U3A was started, we have registered some 1350 members in total, up to the 2015 AGM, and, as previously stated, we are pleased to say that 16 of those original members are still on the books!

During the lifetime of our U3A we have been fortunate to have had 9 different Chairmen, plus 69 different committee members, as at April 2015, some of whom have done more than one stint on the committee over the years, and filled more than one position in many cases. These are all as listed in the attached Annex.

In May 2015, our U3A is in a strong and viable position. Membership numbers are increasing each year, the wide variety of interest groups is encouraging, plus the number of members who are willing to lead groups. Additionally, there is an upsurge in the number of members willing to sit on the Committee, and this serves to confirm the ongoing success and prosperity of our organisation.

We have now set up an archive which will be stored in our Southerington's depository. Archive material includes Newsletters and Committee Meeting Minutes, from 1996 onwards, plus numerous documents relating to Group Leader Meetings and Neighbourhood and Regional Meetings. Additionally, many items of correspondence have been retained which are considered to be of especial interest.

My thanks to Gordon and Enid Young, Winifred Maine, Leslie Cornfield and Roger Chapman for their assistance in compiling this short memoir of the Melton Mowbray U3A. Any mistakes or discrepancies are down to me, alone.

Alan Barton, Vice-Chairman 2011 - 2015

March 2016 saw the 20th Anniversary of Melton Mowbray U3A. This was celebrated at the AGM with the cutting of appropriately decorated cakes by one of the original members and a buffet at the end of the meeting.

Annex 1 - Committees

1996

Chairman - Margaret Butler
Asst. to the Chairman - Gordon Young
Secretary - Mary Wilson
Membership Secretary - Len Pearce
Treasurer - Joan Dixon
Newsletter Editors - Enid Young/Juliana Hancock

1997

Chairman - Gordon Young
Asst. Chairman - Bill Caulfield
Secretary - Molly Featherstone
Treasurer - Joan Dixon
Membership Secretary - Len Pearce
Speaker Secretary - Hilda Fortey
Newsletter Editors - Juliana Hancock/Sally Edwards
Members - Mary Wilson, Wendy Varley

1998

Chairman - Gordon Young
Vice Chairman - Tom Lowther
Secretary - Molly Featherstone
Treasurer - Wendy Varley
Membership Secretary - Len Pearce
Speaker Secretary - Rick Stables
Members - John Plumb, Shirley Cornfield, Anne Duckworth

1999

Chairman - Gordon Young
Deputy Chairman - Tom Lowther
Secretary - Molly Featherstone
Treasurer - Wendy Varley
Membership Secretary - Len Pearce
Speaker Secretary - Rick Stables
Members - John Plumb, Shirley Cornfield, Anne Duckworth, Christine Adams, Joan Dixon

2000

Chairman - Tom Lowther (stood down in August 2000, due to ill-health)
Secretary - Molly Featherstone
Treasurer - Peter Maine
Membership Secretary - Sheila Charlton
Speaker Secretary - Christine Adams
Newsletter Editor - John Duckworth – then became Vice-Chairman, and took over as Chairman following Tom standing down, in September
Members - Joan Dixon, Anne Duckworth, Connie Howling, Jean Kent, Shirley Cornfield, Alan Gosling, Derek Larder

2001

Chairman - John Duckworth
Secretary - Anne Robinson
Treasurer - Irene Smith
Membership Secretary - Sheila Charlton
Newsletter Editor - Peter Maine
Members - Derek Larder, Jean Kent, Nancy Tilney, Patrick McCollum
Connie Howling, Alan Gosling, Roger Chapman

2002

Chairman - John Duckworth
Vice-Chairman - Peter Maine - and Newsletter Editor
Secretary - Anne Robinson
Treasurer - Irene Smith
Membership Secretary - Jean Kent
Speaker Secretary - Patrick McCollum
Members - Alan Gosling, Winifred Maine, Enid Young, Joan Gregory

2003

Chairman - John Duckworth
Secretary - Anne Robinson
Treasurer - Colin Beavis
Membership Secretary - Jean Kent
Newsletter Editor - Peter Maine
Members - Patrick McCollum, Joan Gregory, Winifred Maine, Enid Young

2004

Chairman - Winifred Maine
Secretary - Anne Robinson
Treasurer - Colin Beavis
Membership Secretary - Jean Kent
Newsletter Editor - John Playfer
Members - Joan Gregory, Patrick McCollum, Wendy Stanley, Gordon Young

2005

Chairman - Winifred Maine
Secretary - Anne Robinson
Treasurer - Colin Beavis
Membership Secretary - Jean Kent
Newsletter Editor - John Playfer
Members - Joan Gregory, Elinor Richards, Wendy Stanley, Harry McDermot,
Gordon Young – in Feb 2005, Gordon was elected as Chairman of the
East Midlands Association of U3A's

2006

Chairman - Winifred Maine
Vice-Chairman - Leslie Cornfield
Secretary - Anne Robinson
Treasurer - Colin Beavis
Membership Secretary - Jean Kent
Newsletter Editor - John Playfer
Members - Elinor Richards, Wendy Stanley,
Harry McDermott, Gordon Young

In September 2006, Harry became the Speaker Secretary, Wendy, Notice Board & Social Events Secretary, Elinor became Groups Co-ordinator, and Gordon, Foyer Display organiser.

2007

Chairman	- Leslie Cornfield
Secretary	- Anne Robinson
Treasurer	- Colin Beavis
Membership Secretary	- Jean Kent
Speaker Secretary	- Harry McDermott
Group Co-ordinator	- Elinor Richards
Newsletter Editor	- Sue Morris
Displays	- Gordon Young
Notice Board	- Ken Holt

2008

Chairman	- Leslie Cornfield
Secretary (from Nov)	- Annabelle Meek
Treasurer	- Colin Beavis
Membership Secretary	- Jean Kent
Group Co-ordinator	- David Mellor
Newsletter Editor	- Sue Morris
Displays	- Gordon Young
Social Secretary	- Elizabeth Cobley
Catering Representative	- Netta Macdonald – also, Speaker Secretary from September '08
Minutes Secretary	- Barbara Simpson

2009

Chairman	- Leslie Cornfield
Secretary	- Annabelle Meek
Treasurer	- Peter Simpson
Membership Secretary	- Jean Kent
Newsletter Editor	- Sue Morris
Minutes Secretary	- Barbara Simpson
Social Secretary	- Elizabeth Cobley
Speaker Secretary	- Netta Macdonald
Members	- Gordon Young, Marion Brundell, Liz Grigg

2010

Chairman	- Liz Grigg (Liz resigned in September '10, due to ill-health)
Secretary	- Annabelle Meek
Treasurer	- Peter Simpson
Membership Secretary	- Jean Kent
Social Secretary	- Elizabeth Cobley
Speaker Secretary	- Netta Macdonald (Netta resigned as Speaker secretary in June)
Newsletter Editor	- Steve Orrell
Group Co-ordinator	- Marion Brundell
Minutes Secretary	- Barbara Simpson
Member	- Gordon Young – following Liz' illness, Gordon stood in pro tem as Chairman in all but name

During 2010, as a result of illness and accident affecting several of the committee members, a number of volunteers were co-opted on to the committee. These were: Raymond Barwell, Julia Brown, Di Gorman, Gillian Kilpatrick, Cynthia Plummer and Marjorie Shaw.

2011

Chairman	- Eric Cobley
Vice-Chairman	- Alan Barton
Business Secretary	- Leslie Cornfield
Treasurer	- Peter Simpson
Group Co-ordinator	- Gay Wilson
Newsletter Editor	- Di Gorman
IT & Training	- Steve Orrell
Speaker Secretary	- Gill Kilpatrick and Marjorie Shaw
Membership Secretary	- Richard Bewell
Social Secretary	- Elizabeth Cobley
Minutes Secretary	- Sylvia Donovan

2012

Chairman	- Eric Cobley
Vice-Chairman	- Alan Barton
Business Secretary	- Leslie Cornfield
Treasurer	- Jackie McMillan
Group Co-ordinator	- Gay Wilson
Newsletter Editor	- Di Gorman
IT & Training	- Peter Matthews
Speaker Secretary	- Marjorie Shaw
Membership Secretary	- Richard Bewell
Social Secretary	- Elizabeth Cobley
Minutes Secretary	- Sylvia Donovan

2013

Chairman	- Eric Cobley
Vice-Chairman	- Alan Barton
Business Secretary	- Leslie Cornfield
Treasurer	- Jackie McMillan
Group Co-ordinator	- Gay Wilson
Newsletter Editor	- Christine Bluett
IT & Website Administrator	- Peter Matthews
Speaker Secretary	- Marjorie Shaw
Membership Secretary	- Richard Bewell
Social Secretary	- France Waite
Minutes Secretary	- Sylvia Donovan

2014

Chairman	- Gay Wilson
Vice-Chairman	- Alan Barton
Business Secretary	- Elaine McGinlay
Treasurer	- Jackie McMillan
Group Co-ordinator	- Graham Cherryman
Newsletter Editor	- Christine Bluett
IT & Website Administrator	- Peter Matthews
Speaker Secretary	- Marjorie Shaw – Elizabeth Cobley co-opted Feb '15, to assist
Membership Secretary	- Bill Shaw
Social Secretary	- Frances Waite
Minutes Secretary	- Sylvia Donovan

2015

Chairman	- Gay Wilson
Vice-Chairman	- Graham Cherryman
Business Secretary	- Janet Hawke
Treasurer	- Maureen Carruthers
Group Co-ordinator	- Diane Cherryman
Newsletter Editor	- Christine Bluett
IT & Website Administrator	- Lyn Palmer
Speaker Secretary	- Elizabeth Cobley
Membership Secretary	- Bill Shaw
Social Secretary	- Frances Waite
Minutes Secretary	- Sylvia Donovan

2016

Chairman	- Gay Wilson
Vice-Chairman	- Graham Cherryman
Business Secretary	- Janet Hawke
Treasurer	- Maureen Carruthers
Group Co-ordinator	- Diane Cherryman
Newsletter Editor	- Trevor Wright
IT & Website Administrator	- Lyn Palmer
Speaker Secretary	- Elizabeth Cobley
Membership Secretary	- Bill Shaw
Minutes Secretary	- Geraldine Green (not committee post)

2017

Chairman	- Alan Barton
Vice-Chairman	- Sue Wright
Business Secretary	- William Pead
Treasurer	- Maureen Carruthers
Group Co-ordinator	- Diane Cherryman
Newsletter Editor	- Trevor Wright
IT & Website Administrator	- Lyn Palmer
Speaker Secretary	- Judith Jeffery
Membership Secretary	- Jackie McMillan
Minutes Secretary	- Geraldine Green (not committee post)