

DUNS AND DISTRICT U3A

Thoughts from the Chair: It seems incredible that it is a mere 12 months ago that Genny Dixon and I discussed the lack of opportunity in the area to learn or share knowledge. Both of us have a background in various forms of learning and we knew of very active U3As in the area. So the journey began!

Two open meetings were held in the Volunteer Hall supported by A Heart for Duns and the interest and enthusiasm generated showed we were on the right track. Volunteers at the second meeting became members of the Steering Group helped by existing U3As and the Third Age Trust. Responsibilities for individual members of the Group were assigned and a strong team approach began to grow.

It was at that point Duns and District U3A took on a life of its own. Enrolment day attracted nearly a hundred people, almost 50% more than our hoped-for target. Now with full membership of the Third Age Trust, we have over 150 members and more than 20 groups.

In a few months we will hold our AGM and form a Committee. We would welcome interest from anyone who would like to get more involved in the development and sustainability of our U3A.

Jottings from some of the Groups: Themed Book Group

Both groups have now read two historical novels, both set in the USA; Golden Hill by Frances Spufford, set in New York in 1746, and Days Without End by Sebastian Barry set in 1850. Both books provided a rich seam for discussion covering areas such as slavery, Irish immigration, homosexuality and saloon bar culture as well as the two different periods.

Whitsome Ark Craft Group

After four sessions group members can proudly display fabric Christmas trees in pots, felt hearts, fabric purses and, for some, first attempts at crochet. Those who couldn't crochet benefitting from the help of those who can! The aim is to make something in the two hour session or learn new techniques. Tote bags are next!

Geology Group

With more than 20 members, the group has looked at Climate through Time, Rock Identification and Cheviot Volcanoes. At this last session, experiments with a wax volcano achieved some excellent eruptions. After this it was time for the party poppers representing Mount Vesuvius which was about to erupt but, when would it actually explode? Two clamp stands on two tables were set up, party poppers fixed to mass hangers loaded with 100gm masses having predicted when we would have to evacuate the people. One popper 'erupted' at 600gm but the other one did not explode until 2kg!

Chapter and Verse Group

Ideas for creating a character were discussed at the first session and group members were asked to go away and write a few paragraphs. Entering the realms of writing may have appeared somewhat daunting initially, it certainly was for the Group Leader!!!! However worries were unfounded. Everyone participated, was supportive and sensitive. The next session is on 21st February which, if the weather is kind, may include a walkabout!

Ceilidh and Country Dancing

Lots of positive comments from group members, some of whom are planning to attend a forthcoming dance at the Volunteer Hall and have learned the first six dances specially!

Singing for Pleasure

An encouraging start has been made and the next meetings will have a selection of Scottish songs and some modern music. There will be some fun music like singing in rounds and simple harmonies together with some new songs to learn with the aid of a willing accompanist on guitar and even a bit of drumming. The group meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month at Boston Court from 2pm to 4pm. Please call Lynne on 07553 191699 if you are interested or for more information.

Latin and Classical Studies

Who would have thought Latin could be so enjoyable! The group has been brushing up on their grammar whilst finding out about life in Pompeii before the eruption of Vesuvius. A menu for the festival of Saturnalia has been created although stuffed dormice dipped in honey and rolled in poppy seeds have not been attempted – yet!

Spotlight on a Group Leader: We hope to include a profile of a Group Leader in each newsletter. They are the absolute backbone of our U3A and each has a personal story to tell. Our first is:

Donald Stokes, Classical Music Appreciation: I have loved classical music ever since my mother took me to see my first opera ("I Pagliacci") at the New Theatre, Cardiff - queuing for a seat in the 'gods' at one & sixpence as I recall!). It has proved to be a great source of pleasure and comfort to me throughout my thirty-four years in the Royal Navy, and now in my retirement I am delighted to be able to share some of this pleasure with others, and to explore this magical world.

Coming Soon: 'History and Cultures of the Middle East'

Southfield Community Centre is the venue for this new group starting on Monday 4th February from 10am to 12 noon and fortnightly thereafter. The group will explore aspects of the history and cultures of the Middle East. An overview of the region will focus on the many empires that rose and fell in the region: their histories, their art and architecture, religions and peoples. There will be opportunities to explore a range of contemporary topics of interest to the group: ethnic and religious identities, Arabic literature and art, ways of life, the position of women, and current political issues. No prior knowledge of the region is needed.

"We can offer a variety of topics, but we are keen to talk about matters that are of particular interest to members of the group" say Janet and Paul Starkey leaders of the group. "We will be encouraging plenty of discussion at all the sessions too!"

More information on all the Groups can be found at our website: www.dunsu3a.com

Next time: news from the History, Bridge and Italian Conversation Groups

Don't forget the next monthly meeting on TUESDAY 12th FEBRUARY at the Volunteer Hall when Eric Branse-Instone will be speaking about Understanding Historic Buildings

This meeting is open to all - members and non-members. Tea and coffee from 10am for 1030.

Tell us what you think;

We would love to hear about your experiences as a member of the Duns and District U3A. Which groups are you enjoying and why? Has membership made a difference to your life? What would you like us to do next? Please send any comments to: dunsu3a@gmail.com. We may include them in our next newsletter, but without using your name.