

**A HISTORY
of
WELWYN HATFIELD
U3A / u3a**





UNIVERSITY OF THE
THIRD AGE **U3A**

**RETIRED?
WANT TO LEARN?
MAKE NEW FRIENDS
U3A IS FOR YOU.**



NEXT MEETING AT HATFIELD SPORTS HALL
WEDNESDAY 16TH APRIL 11 AM
THEN ALTERNATELY AT
VINEYARD BARN DIGSWELL RISE W.G.C.
WEDNESDAYS 10.30 AM
AND
HATFIELD SPORTS HALL TRAVELLERS LANE
MONDAYS 10.30 AM

INFORMATION LEAFLET FROM
LOCAL LIBRARIES.

ENQUIRIES FROM WG 323669 AND HATFIELD 65361.

WHL WELWYN·HATFIELD·LEISURE·

Steering Committee

Joan Bensley

Margery Wood

Doris Poth

Meg Ainsworth

Joan Francis

Ann Sargent

Gordon Conradi

Dolly Perkins

Pat Chapman

1st Official Programme



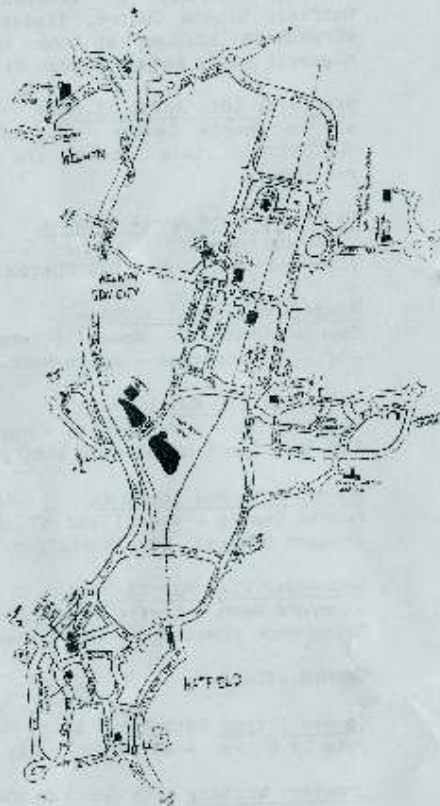
Spring 1986

U3A

U3A OFFERS YOU A NEW APPROACH TO STUDYING AND ENJOYING LIFE. IF YOU ARE RETIRED AND WOULD WELCOME AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET PEOPLE AND TO LEARN ABOUT SOMETHING WHICH INTERESTS YOU THEN U3A IS FOR YOU.....

WHL

WELWYN-HATFIELD LEISURE



Buses: Hatfield/Welwyn Garden
(Digwell Road)
G1 G3 300 303

Welwyn Garden/Hatfield
(Truvcillers Lane)
300 303

THIRD AGE TRUST



CERTIFICATE OF AFFILIATION

U3A - Welwyn Garden City / Hatfield Group

IS AN AFFILIATED LOCAL BRANCH OF THE
THIRD AGE TRUST (OPERATING AS THE
UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE)

Date February 25/87

No. 70

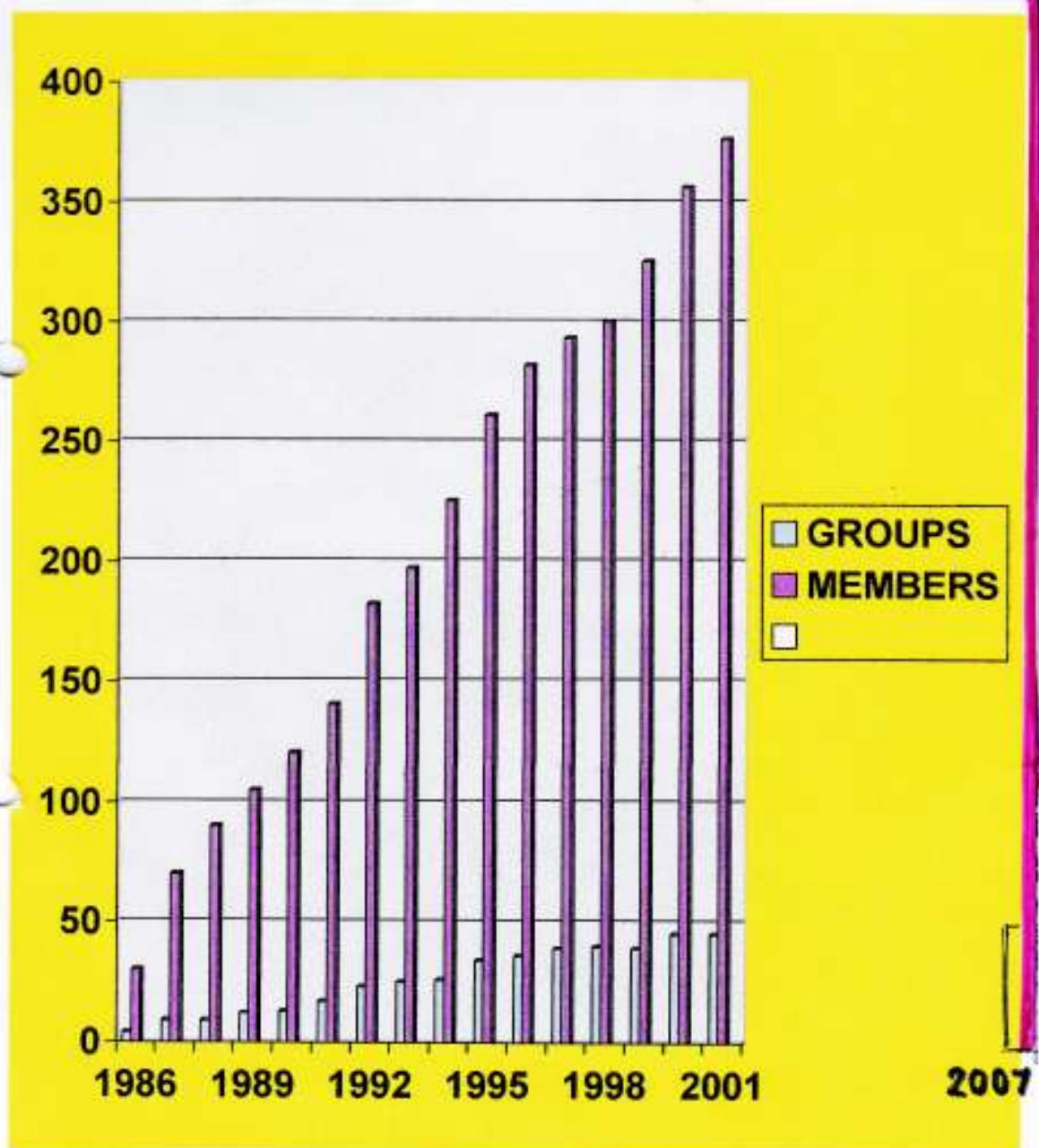
Registered Charity No 288007





WELWYN/HATFIELD

437



**GRAPH SHOWING RISE IN NUMBER OF
MEMBERS AND GROUPS 1986/2001**

MEMORIES OF WELWYN/HATFIELD U3A

IN 1995 Val Fieth was employed by Welwyn/Hatfield Council to be in charge of a "Fun for the Over 50's" department, funded by them. She did this energetically, forming groups which people could attend at a very low charge, and arranging many outings for retired people. There was a lot for the body, but very little for the mind. So in 1995, when Val arranged a Seminar of all the activities available, she included a talk from some members of the Stevenage group of the University of the Third Age, which I attended. Shortly after, Ann Sargent (now, alas, disabled by M.S.) and myself were summoned to a meeting at the Campus with the idea of forming a U3A group. Neither of us had any knowledge of the Association, so Val contacted the National Office (which at the time was organized by Dianne Norton, literally from her front bedroom) and was sent some information, and we visited Stevenage and Harpenden groups. Having been promised total backing from the Council, we advertised and about 15 people met each week in some very odd places, like the bar of Campus West.

A Committee was formed, and we decided to meet alternately in Hatfield, in Minster House, and Campus West, in what was then a very small room. All expenses were paid by the Council, including printing.

We were able to get speakers each week – unpaid – and anxious to form Groups. This we did mainly under the enthusiasm of Ann, Philip and Margaret Turner, and Katie Nixon, who started the first German Group as German was her first language. Gradually numbers increased, and we were able to form more self-help groups– languages, Art, Arts Appreciation, Keep Fit, singing being but a few. We hired the Council Mini-Bus to bring disabled people to our meetings. Unfortunately this was discontinued in 2000, as anyone over 70 had to have a special test to drive them.

We started to enjoy U3A holidays, organized first by Doris Poth and then by Margaret Hakansson, who also organized Theatre Groups. These still continue, and are enjoyed by many. Day trips are led by members of the Arts Appreciation Group, and are very popular. On reaching our 10th Birthday numbers had risen to three figures, and we moved to larger premises (at present we meet in the Ludwick Family Centre in WGC and the Lord William Cecil Memorial Hall in Hatfield) . We had long since become autonomous and had no help from the Council. Our membership fee is £15 a year, which includes the Wednesday meeting and any groups. For some, it is a lifeline after the death of a spouse or a lonely retirement. For all, it is a place where we meet friends and enjoy their company. We particularly enjoy the Christmas lunches at a local hotel, & 'bring and share' at other events, including the Summer Party at the Hospice day centre, where our gardening group was responsible for all the initial work on the garden, taking it from a very sparse green space to a beautiful place to sit. Some of the group still help in its maintenance. Pat Pike makes herself responsible for food events, and has produced some excellent meals after A.G.M.s.

We meet for 3 terms a year, and very soon after we began some folk did not appreciate the long holiday gap. So, round about 1998, we suggested that members who so desired could hold Coffee Mornings at their homes. This took on very well, particularly in the gardens of Malcolm and Myrtle Pit-Keathly, and Peter and Pat Lomer.

Every effort is made to move forward with the times, mainly of course in the computer field. Our notices are shown on screen before the meetings, and speakers have the use of a power Point Projector if they wish. Gone are the times when we did not pay our speakers, and we now have a 'Speakers team' who put our Wednesday programme together, and a very good one it is too.

The number of U3A's in the country has risen enormously, and we now have a very good National Committee. The organization goes from strength to strength, and I am sure we will too.

– Joan Bensley (June 2007)

November 1990

A belated thanks for all your support at "Contact 90" – a reasonably successful day I think. If we try it again it must be somewhere large enough to give each interest Group a better chance of meeting the visitors.

I did hope we might unearth some interest Group Leaders, but so far only two volunteers, one to take Music Appreciation to Hatfield, the other is a possible leader for a "sociable friendly" Bridge playing group.

One common comment was why have "Contact" if places in interest groups were not readily available. My reply to that is we must ascertain what the need is and find some means of satisfying that desire to join us. Owing to pressure for places the decision has been taken, with the approval of existing members, of the Pen and Ink Group to split, Welwyn Garden members to meet at the Vineyard, and on alternate Mondays the Hatfield Group to meet at the Forum. The Hatfield Group is full before the first meeting has taken place. I know there is similar pressure on other groups; what can be done to alleviate the situation? Anyone out there with a magic wand?

We are growing slowly but surely, now 143 members – better than a "boom and bust" growth. One factor does bother me: can we find somewhere for our Christmas Party meeting – I fear that Minster House may be bursting at the seams. Success has its penalty!

One awful problem has been lifted off my mind. Rosemary and Brian Mitchell have undertaken the programme function from Anna Bailey, who had to take on a very time-consuming task for her other lifelong interest, the St. John's Association. So if you have any ideas for meetings fire them at Rosemary and Brian – good ideas are always welcome.

Thoughts for the future; our A.G.M. will be mid-February 1991 for certain! I will definitely be moving out of the Chair, a breath of fresh air is necessary if the branch is to maintain its health. Having disclosed that, I sincerely hope that some of the existing committee will carry on to maintain some continuity for whoever is elected.

As winter approaches and holidays 1991, our highly efficient travel organiser, Joan Bensley has two in prospect, following the roaring success of the Paris outing. A similar 4-day tour to Amsterdam next September is planned, and a more ambitious 9-day tour in mid-June through France to the western Pyrenees, with a leisurely taste of the Dordogne area on the way south. Please spread the word; too often it was said last year that members were ignorant of some events.

For financial reasons it is desirable that we are registered as a Charitable Organisation. Is there anyone who would undertake to study the why's and wherefores of a model constitution, explain it to the members, and see it through to acceptance by the Charity Commissioners. I have some guidance notes available

Thank you all for your continuing loyalty to the Welwyn Hatfield Branch of U3A.

GROUP NEWS:

Currently there are 44 Groups. The following have vacancies and Group Co-ordinators should be contacted for further information.

Bridge for Beginners	Dance	Gardening
Family History	Indoor Bowls	Keep Fit
Music Appreciation 'A'	Philosophy II	Wildlife Watch
Photography	Paint and Draw	

Proposed New Groups : Archaeology - contact: Brian Kent
Doomsday Book: contact: Myrtle Pit-Keathly.

DIARY DATES:

9 April - SUNDAY LUNCH - Red Lion Hatfield £6. main meal including coffee. 40 maximum.
contact : Joan Bensley
13 June DOME VISIT - additional coach - £18. inclusive : contact; Margaret Hakansson
8 August COACH OUTING TO NORWICH - contact : Doris Poth
10 October COACH OUTING TO WINDSOR CASTLE -contact: Michael McArdle.

See Noticeboard for further information.

PLEASE NOTE!!!!!!

As part of the proposed co-operation with U3A in Poland, Stan Stanley is trying to organise a visit to SZCZECIN and a Tour of part of Poland, including WARSAW, CRACOW and other places of special interest. The tour would take place either this September or late May 2001. It would be by plane to Warsaw or Berlin and by coach in Poland for 12 to 14 days. The holiday would start and end in Welwyn Garden City. Stan aims to keep the cost low without the loss of comfort - hopefully about £700 each, half board. However, to make the venture viable, we need at least 36 participants. If you would like to come with us, please help to get the cost right. Put your name on the list on the noticeboard or call STAN on 01707 - 326175.

A.G.M. 8 MARCH 2000: The following are your new Committee:

CHAIRMAN: Martin Brennan	VICE CHAIRMAN : Peter Lomer
SECRETARY: Molly Luther-Smith	TREASURER: Myrtle Pit-Keathly.
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER: Brian Kent	MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY : Derek Greener
ASSISTANT SECRETARY: Doris Litten	PRESENTATION: Betty Mathews
Pat Pike	TRAVEL & THEATRE: Margaret Hakansson
Merle Davey	SPEAKERS TEAM: Vernon Higgins ,
	Sheila Conradi; Ona Glover; Stan Stanley

Co-opted : Joan Bensley.

CALLING ALL ARTISTS: MILL GREEN MUSEUM ART COMPETITION- CLOSING DATE 31 MAY 2000. Entries wanted inspired by any aspect of the site from waterwheel, river or garden or museum collection. Any art form accepted. Prizes: £25. Boon voucher: £15. Boon Voucher. £10. voucher.

NEXT ISSUE : JULY. Deadline for contributions 15 June to either Pat Pike or Rosemary Mitchell or by Newsletter Box.

Editors would like to thank contributors to this first issue. Your ideas have been noted for future reference. Comments on format and other ideas would be appreciated.

OUR U3A: A BRIEF HISTORY

We are celebrating 2012 as our Silver Jubilee year because 1987 is the date on our Certificate of Affiliation; but in fact the first activities occurred during the preceding year. Val Fieth, a local government officer charged with planning activities for the over fifties, called three meetings of interested parties in March 1986. It was decided to hold weekly Wednesday meetings. These started on 16 April; twenty-six people attended. At first it was managed by Val for the Council. She got the programmes printed and arranged for sheltered accommodations to be used free.

We have a copy of the first term's programme, starting with a talk by a member of Harpenden U3A; Harpenden and Stevenage are the only Hertfordshire U3As to predate us. Just two study groups, French and Creative Writing existed at this early stage.

Happily, there are still connections with this early U3A. Val Fieth, having retired, is now a member, regularly attending Wednesday meetings. Joan Bensley, who

was at the first meeting, still keeps in touch from her Hitchin retirement. The French group, meeting at Barndicott, has been tutored from the start by Jacqueline Sanger, who still continues in this capacity, with the group still meeting at the same place.

In June 1986, it was decided to appoint a steering committee, with Joan Bensley as Chairman. The programme for the second term shows a growing, more robust organisation. The range of topics for Wednesday meetings was broader and more like today's. Two more groups, Music Appreciation and Recorders had started. An interesting historical note is that the date of the summer garden party was changed because of the Royal Wedding; Andrew and Sarah Ferguson's.

Unfortunately, no programmes have survived from then until 1988, so committee minutes and an attendance book are our only historical sources. In November 1986, the first formally constituted committee was

WELWYN-HATFIELD U3A: CHAIRMEN

1986	JOAN BENSLEY
1986-7	ANN SARGANT
1987-9	MARGERY WOOD
1989-91	DEREK GREENER
1991-3	JOAN BENSLEY
1993-6	MYRTLE PIT-KEATHLY
1996-8	ONA GLOVER
1998-2000	MALCOLM PIT-KEATHLY
2000-02	MARTIN BRENNAN
2002-04	PETER LOMER
2004-06	BRIAN KENT
2006-8	MYRTLE PIT-KEATHLY
2008-09	STUART BARKER
2009-10	JOHN MIDDLETON
2010-12	SUE KERSHAW

Welwyn-Hatfield U3A started, we have been led by thirteen different chairmen as shown in the table: Joan Bensley and Myrtle Pit-Keathly each twice.

From a modest start, we now have more than fifty study groups. A characteristic of their activities has been visits to gardens, to London sights, to theatres and many more. Until recently members have enjoyed regular holidays, mostly ably organised by Margaret Hakansson. Perhaps the most exciting was Stan Stanley's trip to Poland in 2001, when many friends were made with local U3As. Wouldn't it be great if holidays were started again by one of the newer generation of members?

The world has changed in many ways over these twenty-five years; nowhere more than in the extraordinary growth of the digital world. We took our first dip in the water in 2003 when Stuart Barker negotiated a generous grant from the National Lottery and we bought our first digital projector and laptop computer. We now have a second projector, only a fraction of the cost and size of the original, and three laptops!

In 2005, we joined the World Wide Web and launched our own website. For most of our software we are much indebted to John Middleton, who developed our membership list into today's sophisticated database and who designed our complex programs for producing the annual subscription notices. John it was who installed our sound systems at Ludwick and Hatfield, a feat of remarkable physical agility for a Third Ager!

The election of Sue Kershaw as chairman, in 2010, supported by a largely new committee, marked the arrival of the next generation of members. This can only be seen as a sign of the healthy state of Welwyn-Hatfield U3A. Long may it continue to flourish!

Stuart Barker

elected, with Ann Sargent as Chairman. The subscription then was two pounds per term.

From early in 1987, discussions took place on our affiliating to the Third Age Trust. Our affiliation certificate was issued on February 25th. This is the date we are now celebrating. We were the seventieth U3A to affiliate; today the latest figure is six hundred and thirty!

Membership numbers have grown steadily through the years: the hundred mark was passed in 1988, two hundred in 1993, the year in which we became a registered charity and adopted our first constitution. There were three hundred members in 1996, after which the rate slowed. Four hundred was not reached until 2007. Things speeded up to five hundred in 2009, and early in 2011 we enrolled our six hundredth member. Since



Left to right: Back row: Doris Bullen, Ann Sargent, Margaret Turner, Joan Bensley

Front row: Mary Ruffet, Philip Turner, Doris Poth, Olive and Peter Burrindge, Jim Millichamp

In 1997, the 10th Anniversary of our U3A, a Special Summer Celebration was held at Charles Morris Hall, Tyttenhanger Green, attended by the Mayor of Hatfield. It was a most enjoyable and special day, thanks to all those who helped with the food and decorated the Hall, and Brian Milburn, our regular Wine merchant!

– Pat Pike, 2015



Ona Glover, Chair 1996-98

FEBRUARY
1999



Open & Eastern

Region W



WELWYN/HATFIELD U3A

Have pleasure in inviting

The Worshipful Mayor of Welwyn/Hatfield

Councillor Carl Storer and Mrs.Susan Storer

To a BUFFET LUNCH

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the

(National) University of the Third Age, to be held at the

CHARLES MORRIS HALL ,

Tyttenhanger Green, St.Albans AL4 ORH.

On WEDNESDAY 8th AUGUST, FROM 12 noon – 4 p.m

**RSVP Mrs J.Bensley
60, The Ryde,
Hatfield, AL9 5DL**



15th anniversary party, 2002: the Mayor with founder members



**Kate Wedd (National Chairman), Joan Bensley (Founder WH U3A Chairman);
Katie Nixon (the oldest WH U3A member) cutting the 15th-anniversary cake;
Peter Lomer (Chairman); Martin Brennan (Past Chairman)**





Welwyn-Hatfield U3A – Silver Anniversary!

Our Chairman, Sue Kershaw, greets our 25th year



On 26th February 1987, with 67 members and six groups, Welwyn and Hatfield U3A became the 70th affiliated local branch of The Third Age Trust (operating as the University of the Third Age).

From early beginnings in 1981, starting with Cambridge, The Third Age Trust has grown and now comprises nationally 830 U3As with over 272,163 members. We ourselves now boast 630 members and 54 special interest groups.

We are also members of a much larger International Group, AIUTA (Association internationale des Universités du troisième âge), comprising many national U3As and their affiliates.

Members are welcomed worldwide when travelling abroad to attend their meetings.

Our Members are not only active within our own U3A but take advantage of Summer Schools; indeed, one of our members, Jack Wood, this last year was a lecturer at the Summer School in Cheltenham. We also take the opportunity to attend local U3A Network workshops, such as the recent History Day, participate in the Network Quiz and attend Science Lectures at The Royal Institution, and

Concerts and Opera performances in London organised by the Third Age Trust.

Many, like myself, regularly attend open lectures at the University of Hertfordshire, benefitting from lectures in the Faculties of Law, Science and Humanities. And many attend the Annual Vice Chancellor's Lecture.

Through the Internet and the Third Age Trust we can take advantage if we wish of online study, procurement of study aids, and assistance from National Group Leaders in various subjects; and as we become more immobile, become members of the Virtual U3A, continuing interests, study and contacts online.

Our thanks must go to those farsighted people who established Wel/Hat U3A and whose commitment and dedication gave us the format which we follow today.

I am convinced that Wel/Hat U3A will continue to thrive, giving many hours of pleasure, stimulation and companionship to all who join; remaining flexible and open to change and development will be the key.

CONGRATULATIONS Welwyn and Hatfield U3A on attaining your 25th Anniversary; may you continue to have many more very successful years.

*CHEERS,
Sue Kershaw, Chair*



Chairman Jean Mackie with David Banks cutting the cake that he made for our 30th anniversary, at Breaks Manor, Hatfield.

The Welwyn-Hatfield U3A ended its summer term on a high note with a lively garden party celebrating its 30th anniversary in the grounds of Breaks Manor in Hatfield. About a hundred members attended, soaking up the sun and enjoying plentiful food and drink. Brains were taxed in a quiz featuring 1987, Welwyn-Hatfield's U3A's foundation year, and also in a photographic competition with a similar theme. Member David Banks, a nonagenarian, provided a celebration cake iced with the U3A logo. Val Fieth, who founded this U3A three decades ago, explained why and how she had done this, to the benefit of so many members, past and present.

– from *Third Age Matters*, Winter 2017

The Welwyn Hatfield U3A (University of the Third Age) ended its summer term on a high note with a lively garden party celebrating its 30th anniversary in the grounds of Breaks Manor in Hatfield.

About a hundred members attended, soaking up the sun and enjoying plentiful food and drink.

Brains were taxed in a quiz featuring 1987, this U3A's foundation year, and also in a photographic competition with a similar theme.

Member David Banks, a nonagenarian, provided a

celebration cake iced with the U3A logo. Val Fieth, who founded this U3A three decades ago, explained why and how she had done this, to the benefit of so many members, past and present.

The University of the Third Age is an international self-help organisation which has existed for over 40 years.

Its aim is to make life-long learning a reality for all those who are no longer in full-time employment. No qualifications are required, just an interest in learning something new and meeting new people.

Welwyn Hatfield U3A has over 800 members and holds weekly Wednesday morning meetings alternately at Ludwick Family Centre and Breaks Manor.

In addition, there are over 60 study groups covering topics including architecture, canasta, multi media studies and world affairs.

New members are always welcome and those interested can find out more from the website u3awelhat.org.uk.

Letters page in Welwyn Hatfield Times, 30 August 2017



During the lockdown of 2019-21, many U3A meetings were held via Zoom, including Committee meetings, like the one shown above held in 2020.

Left to right: Back row: Marie Scales (Secretary), Jill Longman (Speaker Organiser), Joan Scales (Groups Coordinator), Peter Fox (Member Secretary); second row from top: Tony Tutton, Colin Slade, Roger Swaine (Webmaster), Steve Hall; third from top: Pam Williams (Chair), Ann and Roy Madell, Sue Talbot (Treasurer), Diane Coxon; Bottom row: Dave Charlwood, Sandra Williams, Penny Barratt (Vice Chair)





One of the U3A gathering before the pandemic in 2019.

Picture: WELWYN HATFIELD U3A

U3A has been an 'absolute lifeline' for elderly over past year

A committee member of Welwyn Hatfield's University of the Third Age (U3A) group has described it as an 'absolute lifeline' for members over the past year.

U3A is now in its 40th year and Welwyn Hatfield's group has more than 800 members and over 60 interest groups.

The U3A is a worldwide charitable organisation set up for retired people and run by its members, which offers activities including walking, talking, painting, creating, languages, technology and more.

Before lockdown, weekly live talks were provided where members met for a chat and listened to a presentation.

Committee member Steve Hall said: "It's all run by volunteers and people bringing their expertise to it. We would normally have a guest speaker every other week on Wednesdays but

MATT POWELL

Matt.Powell@jarchant.co.uk

had to adapt during the pandemic.

"We usually had over 100 people attend that in a hall. Of course during lockdown we've not been able to do that."

So to adapt the group began giving the talks via Zoom. "Teaching them Zoom was part of the package," admitted Steve.

"They had to learn how to use all this technology first before they could even join us, so that was part of the job the U3A did."

"We've had everything from a producer of Morse tv series to the leader of the Queen's Flight who used to ferry the royal family about on an aircraft."

The talks via Zoom have been very successful with often more than 100 people attending - by introducing members to Zoom the

group was able to introduce new activities.

Steve added: "We've also had coffee mornings, where people can come online via zoom and are split up into small groups. They basically go off into a chat room and have a chat about whatever is going on."

"It's a way of keeping people communicating, particularly as there's a lot of single elderly people out there, who I think the U3A has been an absolute lifeline for them this year."

The group celebrated the 40th year of the U3A by having an open offer to anyone to join them for a guided tour of Oxford via Zoom earlier this month.

But they hope when all restrictions are lifted later this month, they will be able to return to their normal events like hosting a garden party at Breaks Manor in Hatfield.

For more information visit:
u3awelhat.org.uk



Welwyn Hatfield U3A celebrates successful return in first live meeting since 2020

On Wednesday 8th September the Welwyn Hatfield u3a group held its first live presentation meeting since before lockdown. The presentation by prominent u3a member Tony Tutton called 'My Life in Music from Coronation to Corona' charted his life in the music world. From his first singing performance in 1953 during the Coronation celebrations to receiving his first guitar and then a drum kit he charted his love of music throughout his life so far. Highlighting the musicians and singers who had influenced him and playing some of their music Tony related how he and the various groups of which he was a member rose from obscurity to being on the same bill as greats such as Tommy Trinder, Dickie Henderson and Morecambe and Wise in a music career that has spanned over five decades from 1963 to the present day. As drummer and lead singer of the Beaucrees Tony has entertained audiences across much of the UK.

The first presentation meeting was attended by 114 members delighted to be back socialising with their friends and getting back to their old routine. During lockdown fortnightly presentations were still being offered thanks to the efforts of a number of u3a members who organised Zoom meetings, encouraged participation and offered training on its use. Prior to the first live meeting over 100 members were regularly Zooming on a Wednesday morning. In addition many of the 60 interest groups were maintaining their activities via Zoom.

The group are now looking forward to Tony's next u3a performance when he, with his Simply 60's Band, will entertain them at the Autumn Dance on 27th November.

For more information: www.u3awelhat.org.uk

Welwyn Hatfield Times, 20 September 2021