



## The Third Age Trust AGM and Conference 2011

### Highlights

Ian Searle was re-elected as chairman

Pam Jones was elected as SE Trustee (85-48)

Jo Harrison volunteered at the meeting to be treasurer and was immediately co-opted by the NEC

The resolutions went as we voted in committee (networks are recognised, the Third Age Trust does not have to change its name).

Lin Jonas read out a witty poem she had written on Terry Hardie's leaving. It ended "Kiss me, Hardie, Kiss me". I have asked her for a copy to share with our members.

### Location

The location was the University of Nottingham campus, a large, green and leafy park. Accommodation was in modern halls of residence. My room was on the second floor, no lift but the room was clean, had an en suite shower/toilet and internet access. Someone came each day to make the bed. The first dinner and all my breakfasts was in my hall of residence. The lunches and the other dinners and entertainment were in the East Midlands Conference Centre, which was a pleasant, short walk away.

The conference centre is a modern building with a large lecture theatre; upstairs was the Third Age Trust shop, where they gave each attending U3A a full catalogue of the Resource centre.

I also found copies of the DVD "This is U3A", which professionally produced and divided up into 5-minute chunks that can also be seen on Youtube<sup>1</sup>

### Conduct of Meeting

Ian Searle made a good job of chairing all the session (except when his election came up). This year, each delegate had cards with their number of votes written on them. These cards had to be put in boxes and the votes counted with the AGM continued. This was the effect of Fetcham U3A's resolution in 2010.

### Other news

The Third Age Trust had a stall at the Retirement Fair exhibition

There are now 820 U3As and 272,000 members

Mike Long retired in June

Colin Mitchell was thanked for his worked in the SE region - "he worked his socks off".

There were grants for activities involving 5 or more U3As

### Books

The Wiley series "Older and Wiser" was a joint activity with the U3A. The U3A provides some authors and technical editors and receives royalties. The books are selling well in the USA.

### Next AGM

The 2012 AGM will again be at Cirencester; 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> September

### Sessions

#### Meet the members

They had asked members to write why they joined the U3A. There were 15 responses. Then they asked the creative writing groups and got 140 responses in verse, limerick and prose. There were 30 different readings by Barbara Lewis, Ian Searle, Terry Hardie and Hilary Stringer. The best one from about the author's experience within a U3A creative writing group, including "...seeing her in her cardigan, it was difficult to believe that she had once danced naked..." (or words to that effect.). One man, who had spent his youth in the pits, revelled in the chance to learn in later life and introduced us to the word *opsimath* (one her learns late in life – see the whole Wikipedia article at the end of this report). Many of the readings started with bereavement and often contained the words "life-transforming".

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<sup>1</sup> This might be one <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eu4oT4YDe8Y>

## **Estelle (“Don’t call me baroness”) Morris**

Estelle contrasted formal and informal learning. She pointed out the ability of education to bring about cultural change. She was in favour of certificates; it was her degree certificate that had given her social mobility. Education was the best tool politicians had for shaping society. The 1944 education act showed that the government of the time wanted an increase, but a relatively small increase in the number of people for the top jobs, but later as, as the country needed a more highly educated workforce to compete in the world, the comprehensive school system and greater university access were brought in. Other insights were that girls were now out-performing boys because the system had been re-gearred to help girls after they were found to be outperformed academically by boys. It was a constant struggle in government to help one group without disadvantaging other groups.

Often parents did not realise that effort was required from them in the education of their children. She also spoke about 4-agers having lessons in rest homes – to their physical and mental betterment (as measured by fewer tablets and fewer incontinence pads).

## **Professor Peter Kalmus**

He is now emeritus professor at Queen Mary, University of London. He was one of the people who met Mrs Thatcher on her visit to CERN. This was a talk about elementary particle physics.

Points

The Sun is a third generation star; stars making the heavy elements through nuclear fusion have been and gone before the Sun was born. These heavier elements are everywhere including our own bodies, so we can truly say that we are stardust and just as truly say that we are nuclear waste.

The “elementary particles” was originally atoms. The Rutherford showed that the atom contained a nucleus orbited by electrons, But that the atom was 10000 times bigger than the nucleus which was, as Rutherford said, like a fly in a cathedral. From Rutherford the elementary particles were the electron and the nucleus, which was then seen to be composed of neutrons and protons and now the elementary particles are the quarks and the leptons.

I thought was he was an excellent speaker and noted that he can be contacted o [p.i.p.kalmus@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:p.i.p.kalmus@qmul.ac.uk)

Treasurer’s Report

In 2012, the TAT estimates that there will be 300,000 members and by 2020 half a million, but that is only 4.1% of the third-age population.

## **Resolutions**

The proposer and seconder for the second resolution gave such spirited performances that one was almost tempted to vote for them by way of applause, but too much depended on punning the word “TAT”. From the panel we heard that the Third Age Trust had originally been open to other organisations such as (what is now) Age UK and, even, Saga but only the U3As joined up.

## **Professor Heinz Wolf**

If you’ve ever wondered how to take a shower or use a toilet in zero gravity, this was the talk for you. He surveyed projects that satisfied these 3 criteria

- Were very expensive
- Pushed the limits of current technology
- Most people thought were a waste of time

Examples Stonehenge, the Pyramids, Medieval Cathedrals, the Moon Landings

Going to Mars would be such a project. He then discussed how Mars could be “terra-formed”, made to be a bit more like Earth.

## **Professor John Benyon**

He is a professor at Loughborough concentrating on ageing.

The problem used to be that life expectancy was low because so many children died before 1 and before 5. Now these problems have been largely overcome, we see a greater proportion of older people .

Half the population is expected to be over 50 by 2030. The dependency ratio, retired to workers was 1:4 In 2010 and is expected to be 1 to 2 in 2050.

The “fourth age”  $\geq 75$  or  $\geq 88$ .

Average age of retirement

1950	2005	2020	2050	
67	64	65	68	
10.7	20.1	21.6		million people

Older people have not been good at constructing political arguments to promote their welfare. He referred to American book "Bowling Alone" which sees social disintegration and blames it on television. (In this country we might add supermarkets selling beer, so that the social drinking in pubs is less fashionable) If people meet together, they trust each other more and feel more comfortable in their localities.

### **Dr Eric Midwinter**

Eric interpolated a history of the U3A in a stream of jokes.

Example joke: (terminology: privy: outdoors toilet cubicle; cut: canal)

Eric's grandfather, son, did you push privy into cut?

Eric's father: No, father

Eric's grandfather tells his son the story of George Washington and the cherry tree, where George told the truth and so was not punished

Eric's grandfather, son, did you push privy into cut?

Eric's father: Father, I cannot tell a lie. I did push the privy into cut.

Whereupon, the grandfather takes off his brass-buckled belt and starts to beat his son.

"But, father, George Washington wasn't punished"

"Aye, but his father weren't sitting in the cherry tree at the time".

As far as facts go, one of the founders of the U3A seems to have been a master of Trinity College, Cambridge and the original secretariat was a young lady who ran things in her spare time from a spare bedroom in her south London house.

It was mentioned by Eric and possibly earlier by Ian Searle that Peter Kropotkin, as an (intellectual) anarchist) would have approved of the U3A movement, since it was decentralised and not top-down. For those fastidious about the word "anarchy", Eric suggested they use "anacrasyn" instead.

**Barry A Byrne**  
**October 2011**

## **APPENDIX**

An *opsimath* can refer to a person who begins, or continues, to study or learn late in life. The word is derived from the Greek *οψε* (*opse*), meaning 'late' and *μανθάνω* (*manthano*), meaning 'learn'. Opsimathy was once frowned upon, used as a put down with implications of laziness, and considered less effective by educators than early learning. The emergence of "opsimath clubs" has demonstrated that opsimathy has shed much of this negative connotation, and that this approach may, in fact, be desirable. Notable opsimaths include the fictitious character Sir Henry Rawlinson, Grandma Moses and Cato the Elder who learned Greek only at the age of 80.