

New Mills and District



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

2004-2014

Now we are **TEN!**



NEW MILLS U3A TENTH ANNIVERSARY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

From the CHAIR



by ANN APPS

CONGRATULATIONS to all of us on our tenth anniversary! We are members of a popular U3A, with a continually growing membership. The success of our U3A reflects both the opportunities it provides us to learn, exercise and socialise, and the self-help nature of our organisation.

Thank you to all the people who have contributed to our U3A over the last ten years: the founder members; chairs, secretaries, treasurers, membership secretaries, groups coordinators and other committee members; group leaders, who perform an essential function; speaker arrangers; editors of, and contributors to, the newsletter and the website; members who provide hospitality to groups in their own homes; those who prepare refreshments; members who run the book exchange; and everyone who helps in many other ways.

So we are justified in celebrating. I hope everyone enjoys this anniversary edition of the newsletter. Please join us

NEW MILLS U3A TENTH ANNIVERSARY

A decade we can take pride in

at our summer party. And make use of your anniversary pen.

But we should not rest on our laurels. To continue to be a successful U3A we need to develop along with our membership growth.

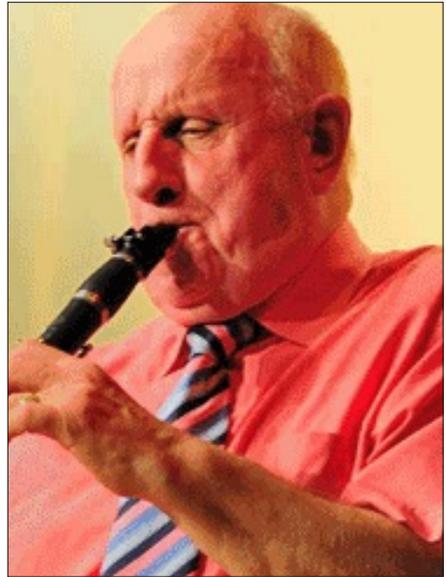
I hope that in the future we shall see more groups, covering more topics, set up to cater for our increased membership.

Celebratory

Please think about whether you can assist in any way, maybe by: performing an organisational role; joining the committee; becoming a group leader or helping as a deputy group leader; making the refreshments at monthly meetings; or in many other ways.

Our U3A operates successfully only if we all join in to help.

Enjoy our celebratory year, and many successful future years!



Mart Rodger will be providing the Summer Party music

WE are celebrating our Tenth Anniversary with a Summer Party on the afternoon of August 19. All our members are welcome to attend this event, which will be held in a marquee on the field next to St George's Hall, Church Lane, New Mills.

The party will be opened by our founder and first Chair, Ethne Bailey, who will cut a celebration cake. Tea and scones with jam and cream will be served, accompanied by musical entertainment from Mart Rodger Manchester Jazz. There will be displays of Groups' activities in St. George's Hall.

Hopefully party-goers will wear hats and the Third Age Trust colours of yellow and blue. So, please come along and enjoy the party!

And it all began with Ethne ...

ETHNE was contemplating retirement. Having worked in adult education and the community and voluntary sectors she was looking to be involved in something based on her experience.

The U3A was attractive to her as it was inclusive and not political or religious. Older people can feel invisible and unwanted but the U3A, being based on members sharing their interests and expertise, is both educational and social.

Was it worth trying to set up a branch in our area? Ethne, her husband Peter and their neighbour Angela thought it was.

Friendship

The regional office and the Marple branch gave advice and the time-consuming work began. Posters and leaflets were professionally produced.

It was always intended that this should be a New Mills and District U3A, so during the winter of 2003/4 Peter and Ethne placed posters and put leaflets through many letterboxes in New Mills, Whaley Bridge and Disley.

On April 27, 2004, the initial meeting was held at Mellor Road URC and 60 people attended with about 40 signing up right



by HAZEL PERRY

away. Thirteen interest groups were formed with leaders (those with expertise) or co-ordinators (those with interest and enthusiasm). Within 18 months there were 165 members and 37 interest groups, with nearly a quarter of members leading groups! So much energy, commitment and enthusiasm had been generated.

Our U3A continues to offer friendship, inclusion and confidence-boosting. It removes isolation and leads to a fuller, happier and healthier life. It is satisfying and thrilling that we have grown to more than 500 members and we are lucky to have members and leaders who are willing to open up their homes.

We still have members who have been committed from the start, but with a larger membership we need more active members. If you haven't volunteered, give it a go. It can be very rewarding.

Thank you Ethne, it was all well worth the effort.

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Ethne Bailey and husband Peter in the garden of their New Mills home ... starting our U3A from scratch took much energy, commitment and enthusiasm

Here's to the next ten years!

TEN years ago when Ethne first mentioned starting a U3A, several people suggested that New Mills folk would not join things and, besides, where on earth would we get group leaders from?

After Ethne did all the hard work a small steering committee was set up and the journey began.

Time was spent on publicity and, as is still the case, a suitable venue was the next problem. We had several moves until St. George's church hall was settled on.

When we reached the grand total of 50 members we were quite pleased with ourselves ... little did we imagine such massive growth and the variety of groups we would offer ten years later.

I personally have greatly enjoyed all the

by DAPHNE HIGGINS

different groups I have tried, Medieval History and the Theatre are the ones I have been in longest. But the greatest joy of my membership has been meeting new people and sharing hobbies that keep us active and, hopefully, 'the little grey cells' ticking over.

The people of New Mills and District now have a great place to meet and the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of activities and interests.

I am sure this will enable our generation to go on forever and annoy the government some more!

With a thank you to Ethne, let's raise a toast to the next ten years. Cheers!!

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'Why not write down some memories of the two U3A groups you ran?'
'Do you think I should?'
'Well, yes.'



by
BARBARA JAGGER

MEMORY is fickle. But I do remember how it all started, that I went to a meeting at Ethne and Peter's house supposedly to plan the formation of a U3A group for New Mills.

It seemed a good idea. And I needed to settle into this new town I'd chosen. Someone had predicted in my hearing that at least ten people were expected at the meeting, so I wasn't necessarily committing to anything. Wrong. We were

a handful. Responsibilities followed.

And I recall a magnificent take-over of that large lower room at Providence Church, lined for the occasion with signing-on stations. Interested in Drama with the new U3A? Sign here... Interested in Indoor Bowls? Sign here... Willing to lead the Drama group? Sign here...

Invitations circled the room and we circled with them. I could, I thought, offer to lead a Poetry reading group or a

Bridge to the future

I joined the U3A in late 2004 because I wanted to learn how to play bridge and Peter Bailey was running a beginners' class in the Mellor Road church which had recently been renovated: all the pews stripped out, carpeting laid and a bright, modern kitchen added.

A far cry from the rather gloomy interior I remembered as a child. Also learning bridge were Chris and Dave Farrell – Chris and I had played together as toddlers, and not seen each other for over 50 years. Another player I had not seen for 50 years was Irene Blagden, who went to New Mills Grammar but was several years my junior so we had slightly differing memories. Assimilating



by **CHRIS BOND**

the difficult subject of bridge was made easier because it was surrounded by much good humour from our tutor. I found subsequently that bridge is a subject in which you never stop learning.

Fellow learner Chris Bagley suggested going to the art group, led by Barbara Wyneken. Barbara organised memorable excursions to art galleries – the Tate

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Creative writing group. Folk signed up for both. Since nobody else kept their hand up to lead either of them, I would - oh, well - lead both groups.

So once a month for the next three years, a group of up to ten U3A members gathered in my home (three down each long side of the table, two at each end, myself included, and the table top itself well covered with books, papers, mugs, and biscuits which always had to include home-made ginger versions) to share any poems published in English.

And for rather less than three years, around the same table, a Writing group gathered to share and discuss - sometimes in amazement - each other's monthly offerings of creative writing in

prose, poetry or drama.

Journeys of discovery within the two groups were rich ones - friends made, feelings shared, understanding increased, interest sparked, laughter rippling free, tears swallowed. And if on occasion an 11th person turned up, unforeseen, questing, there was always the bathroom stool.

It was in fact the heaving and hefting of furniture involved that wore me down, that and the growing piles of paper. I reached a point where I needed to turn up at some other door where A.N.Other would take charge. My turn to play out.

Now I'm quietly enjoying membership of two local U3A groups. We need to keep digging.



A shot from the second meeting of the Photography Group led by John Turnbull

sometimes provided with assorted clothing by visitors; the sculpture park at Bretton Hall on a lovely hot summer's day – the sculpture of a crowd of about 550 little clay figures by Anthony Gormley comes to mind at this anniversary time.

The U3A's only photo group, led by John Turnbull, met at members' houses.

Present at the initial meeting on September 16, 2004, were John, Ethne, David Blundell, Barbara Matthews and Barbara Wyneken. Barry Whitehead, Ann and Cliff Kemp and I went along to the

second meeting.

Modern in Liverpool, which was a bit too modern for some; Crosby beach where the statues are lapped by the tide and

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In those days digital cameras were not universally popular, and you could still buy film, or obtain advice by walking into a nearby camera shop. Ethne in particular was very attached to her film camera.

Apart from the group discussing each others' pictures in a supportive and non-competitive manner, which we all appreciated, we went on occasional photo shoots.

John recently recalled that on one such a walk along Laneside, he had to keep telling me to hurry up and keep up with the others, because I appeared to be taking photos of everything in sight. Such is the enthusiasm when you have a new camera to try out...

Early days

The Outings Group then was very popular, as it is today, and on a trip to Masson Mill on November 22, 2004, I took many photos of the looms and yarn in the mill's museum – again, part of the "new camera" effect.

I expect that most of those of us who were members in the early days would say that time has gone quickly and it does not seem like ten years since the U3A was started.

The anniversary also brings fresh to mind the people who were good companions in the early days but who are no longer with us.

All you need is a little curiosity



by IAN WESTALL

AT the outset of the New Mills and District U3A there was no science related group, despite there being several distinguished members with science related careers or backgrounds.

By 2008 David Cohen decided it was time to rectify the situation. David, with the connivance of John Turnbull, Groups Co-ordinator at the time, let it be known that a new group was being formed and that it would be entitled 'Science and Society.'

The Society bit was most important as it was recognised that a pure science group would probably not be attractive to the majority of our membership, largely untutored in science, and that topics based on science but with a strong relevance to people's everyday lives would be much more acceptable.

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Professor Mick Follows (far left), who was visiting from the USA, in discussion with members of our Science and Society Group

As a result, from the outset there has been a good mixture in the group of scientists and engineers, together with folk who have pursued careers in a wide diversity of areas but who have a curiosity about the world around them, about the basis of all the new technologies and their ramifications for our current and future lives.

Most notable guest

Although occasionally we have had talks from experts on various topics, most of the time, the members of the group are encouraged to do a little research of their own prior to the meetings so as to encourage a lively debate and a wide range of opinions. The availability of papers on the internet has

ensured that all are able to access areas of knowledge that would have been nearly impossible not long ago.

Perhaps the most notable guest we have been privileged to have had was in the autumn of 2013 when Professor Mick Follows from Massachusetts Institute of Technology discussed his research into phytoplankton with us. This came about due to Prof Follows' local connection (his parents are from the area) and we were able to take advantage.

We would encourage all who have a curiosity about the world around us to come along and take part in the discussions, to share their knowledge and opinions and to take advantage of the wide experience available within our U3A membership.

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Getting close to the subject pays dividends. *Picture: ANN KEMP*

THE original aim of the Photography Group was to increase the enjoyment of taking pictures, with the emphasis on the basics of photography: composition, exposure, impact. The initial meeting of the group was in September 2004 ... we recently had our 108th meeting.

The outstanding achievement of the group is the “New Mills & District Bridges Project”.

In 2006 we set out to photograph every bridge, (road, rail, canal, river, and foot), in the district. Early in 2007 we mounted a display in the Heritage Centre showing the bridges and pinpointing on area maps the location of each one. During the time we were photographing for the project one of the canal bridges was replaced, so in this

Keep those shutters clicking!



by **CLIFF KEMP**

instance we have a “before and after” record.

In the display over 100 individual bridges were identified with additional images of relevant plaques and brickwork detail. We were confident the area had been completely covered, however eagle eyed locals found a further one or two bridges we’d missed. The pictures, maps etc have been archived and hopefully one day will appear in book form.

At least once a year we take a short stroll, cameras at the ready, this has yielded opportunities to get down close and intimate with the subject.

On several occasions the weather has not

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The outstanding achievement of the Photography Group is the “New Mills and District Bridges Project” when, in 2006, they set out to record every bridge in the area - over a hundred. Pictured left are members of the group with the subsequent display mounted in the Heritage Centre.

Picture: JOHN TURNBULL

been kind for these walks, we are told more dramatic lighting effects can be achieved in wet and cold conditions; I’m not convinced. The pub lunch, a common feature of U3A activities, gives an opportunity to get warm and dry again.

At indoor sessions we have explored the practicalities and opportunities of various subjects including: portraiture, still life, moving objects such as a flickering candle or a clock pendulum, white subjects against white backgrounds.

At our meetings we each table a “picture of the month” on any subject and additionally two or three pictures on a nominated specific theme. We discuss and comment on these pictures in a positive, constructive way.

During our ten years many widely



Whatever the weather - the group suffers for its art. *Picture: ANN KEMP*

differing themes have been explored including: graffiti, reflections, humour, low level, monochrome, urban decay, getting in close. On occasion one member of the group will introduce and explain a particular point of technical interest. Picture stories have also been a feature of

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Our successful U3A

I 'VE been on the U3A committee for about five years. It started when I was invited to put my name forward after presenting an overview of the newly introduced “Gift Aid for Charities” to committee members at their monthly meeting.

Most of my working life involved working on, or with, committees so I knew what to expect and at the next AGM I was accepted

on to the committee. It was a very enjoyable experience, so when I was asked if I would take over as Chair (and had got over my surprise) I decided to accept.

After a settling-in period some of the disciplines of my former life in the voluntary sector began to re-assert themselves. Like so many other voluntary organisations we had been dependent on funding from our local



Indoor sessions allow the group to explore various photographic opportunities

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our meetings; recording the dropping of the Strines Printworks chimney, the saga of “The New Mills Mouse” with the washed and blow dried victim in a starring role.

In the ten years since we first met there have been tremendous advances in digital cameras, the ability to manipulate the images post camera and the way we are able to view, critique, propose and make changes to our efforts immediately

on a large screen. We have thus avoided having to produce relatively expensive prints of our work.

However the original aim is still paramount “to increase the enjoyment in taking pictures and sharing the results”.

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shouldn't stand still



by LIN THOMAS
Deputy Chair

authority and had to prove to councillors that their money had been well spent.

This involved rigorous ways of looking at and measuring our performance over the year; producing statistics was not enough.

With this in mind I asked members of the committee if they would consider a watered-down version of this exercise and in 2009 we spent a considerable time looking at what we did well and identifying ways in which we could improve.

The resulting year plan was reviewed and monitored at each monthly meeting and after 12 months we had successfully met 8 out of the 13 targets we had felt to be important.

The next step was to find out how our wider membership felt we were performing. A questionnaire was made available to all our members at that time and we did get some suggestions to consider and a lot of very positive feedback.

The point of this slice of U3A history is to

emphasise that even a U3A as successful as ours shouldn't just stand still and continue to replicate what has gone before. Our ten year anniversary seems a good opportunity to take a good look at ourselves and think what might be ahead.

If you come to the monthly meetings you may have noticed a large box on the information desk labelled "Suggestions". It's been there for quite some time but unfortunately doesn't deliver many responses.

We value your feedback and we get a fair amount of it via comments made to individual committee members; the monthly coffee

mornings are also a good way to collar us and tell us what you think of our U3A. Another valuable channel for communicating opinions comes from our group

leaders who provide much of our strength and structure.

We are always ready to listen.

Finally, we have a great committee; we recognise our responsibilities but there's always fun and friendships that develop as we work together to support and sustain our U3A.

We will all be at the Garden Party in August and should be wearing our badges – and quite a few of us will be wearing hats!

At the Monthly Meetings there is a large box labelled 'Suggestions' ... it doesn't deliver many responses!

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A good read ... and so much more

by ANNI BOWDEN

ON the right is a picture of the very first New Mills U3A Book Group who began what has become a source of joy and support to our present, much loved gang of readers. To illustrate how much it has come to mean to our Group I asked them to come up with a few words.....

"I feel that Book Group has 'educated' my taste. I have read books which I would never have chosen and found that in consequence my taste in reading has developed and deepened."

"Love the challenge of different genres and choices made by each member. Also I love the getting together which is always fun. Wouldn't be without it for the world."

"I love Book Group! Once a month meetings are just right for me and I hate it if I have to miss a meeting. I've read and enjoyed books I might never have chosen myself and acquired a wonderful group of friends at the same time."

"Book Group is my saviour! I relax with like-minded people and we read and



discuss such diverse literature! We are all special friends."

"Book Group is the highlight of my month. We read some books that really challenge us, some we love, some we really do not! Strangely the ones we dislike give us more discussion as often the ones we love strike a chord that chimes with our life experiences and leads to joyous reminiscence."

As you can see over the years we have become true friends, we laugh uproariously, we support each other in our sadnesses, we share our own and our families' successes AND we have the most fabulous, fun lunches.

(The popularity of reading and discussing books is such that New Mills U3A now has a total of four book groups)

Founding members should be proud



by **DEREK BRUMHEAD**

THE U3A is a nationwide self-help organisation of learning groups aimed at encouraging people no longer in full-time employment to share their knowledge, skills and interests in a friendly environment.

Most local U3As offer a combination of opportunities to study, create, socialise, and contribute greatly to members' overall health and wellbeing. They offer the chance to study many different subjects in such fields as art, languages, music, history, science, philosophy, computing, crafts, photography and walking.

It was Peter Laslett of Cambridge University, one of the instigators of the Open University in the 1960s, who wrote the objects and principles of the U3A in 1981. He wanted groups of



Walkers out and about at Coldwell Clough in 2006 and Chatsworth (right) in 2011

people to get together to learn what interested them, with the aid of a group leader or convener, who would not only co-ordinate and guide their efforts but would also be a tutor although not necessarily in a formal sense. As a result there is no formal distinction between the learners and the teachers.

Howls of protest

Many groups evolve a strong social side, with trips and get-togethers outside the regular classes, and there is also a fine series of such events for our members in general.

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It's good to walk!

WE now have several walking groups and ours has been going for a number of years and is very popular, with a committed group of regular walkers.

I took over the Short Walk with Pub Lunch Group 1 from Peter Wreford, who contributed much to its popularity, about three years ago. I believe that



The U3A approach to learning is – learning for pleasure. This is really no different from the original objects of the university extra-mural departments and the WEA but the way it is achieved is very different. For instance it is not dependent on public funds. In addition, the group leaders or conveners are not necessarily academically qualified in the subjects studied but their knowledge, experience, enthusiasm and commitment for working with their groups make a very successful learning environment. In the true tradition of non-vocational liberal adult education there is no accreditation or

by CHRIS WEAVER

other people involved early on were David Cohen and Mike Pool.

There is no set distance for the walk, but we try to walk for about two hours at a modest pace, along roads, footpaths and canal towpaths that are

not too difficult to deal with. Lunches at local pubs are always very pleasant and the Christmas Lunch now seems to involve a 'theme' (fancy hats for example) and are proving to be very

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validation and there are no assessments or homework or qualifications to be gained. Howls of protest have come from my geology group members when I have teased them by landing a test on them!

Group activities obviously stem from the amazing monthly general meetings where so many meet and make friends whom they would not have otherwise met. It is clearly a good way to meet people who are on the same wavelength.

The founding members should be truly proud of what has been achieved over ten years.

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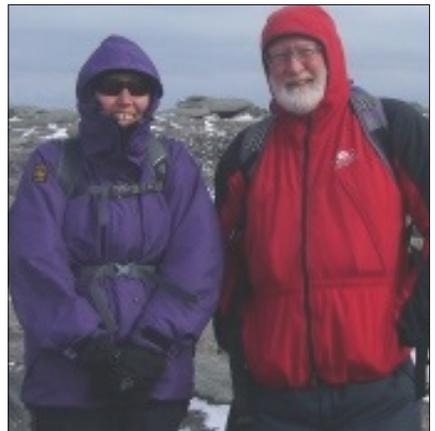
Members of the Walking with Pub Lunch Group from 2006. Thanks to Mike Pool for the picture. Below, right: Members of the Longer Walks Group chilling out ...

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successful. The demand from U3A members has reached the point where I have had to start a waiting list and would ask for a volunteer to come forward to start another group.

We have been to a variety of places including the Nelson Pit Centre at Poynton, Castleton, the Roman Lakes at Marple, Fernilee Reservoir, Whaley Bridge, New Mills and even Chatsworth.

New Mills U3A also has walking groups for 5-7 Miles and Longer Walks.



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We've gone a long way in ten years ...

by ROSEMARY BEE

THE Outings Group took off in the early years of our U3A with a previous member, Beryl Jones, at the helm.

Trips were originally organised on a car sharing basis; now the majority involve coach travel.

The outings, which soon came under new management, (Barbara Matthews and Barbara Riley followed by Barbara Matthews and Pat Cooper), have been numerous and diverse, usually on a monthly basis.

We have visited castles, stately homes and any number of fascinating places near and far.

One of the most moving was a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum, near Lichfield. Separate memorials pay tribute to the Armed Forces, emergency services and voluntary organisations.

In 2011 a new venture began with a three day break in August when we visited Highclere Castle (ITV'S Downton Abbey). This was followed by four days in the



You meet some interesting folk with the Outings Group

Oxford area in 2012 (Blenheim Palace etc.) and Northumberland and County Durham in 2013.

This year we are looking forward to five days (!) in August on a tour of Suffolk and Constable Country.

All this and other outings too numerous to mention represent a fantastic achievement by the outings teams. Long may their enthusiasm and commitment continue to inspire us with new places to explore.

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Are you willing to join the team?

by ANN APPS, Chair

WOULD you like to help with the running of your U3A by becoming its Business Secretary, Speaker Arranger

or committee member?

The AGM this year will be held on October 21.

The current Secretary is due to retire and we have two further committee vacancies.

Several other

committee members, including the Treasurer, will be seeking re-election.

Duties of committee members include attending committee meetings on the first Tuesday of each month, and helping to run the monthly meetings and the coffee mornings.

The Business Secretary deals with administrative requirements, assists the Chair as needed, books rooms for committee,

general and coffee meetings, and is the main contact point for communications from the Third Age Trust nationally and regionally.

All committee members are trustees of the New Mills and District U3A.

This is not as daunting as it sounds. Trustees of a charity are necessary to ensure funds are spent appropriately. Any liability is covered by insurance from the Third Age Trust.

Please let me, or any committee member, know if you are interested in joining our friendly committee, or would like more information.

You are welcome to attend committee meetings before October to learn more about how we operate.

If you are interested in becoming our Business Secretary please contact the current Secretary, John Turnbull (01663 765287,

secretary@newmillsu3a.org.uk), who will provide more information about the role.

The Speaker Arranger role is available as soon as possible. This person does not have to



be a committee member.

Their duties include booking and greeting speakers for our monthly meetings. If we wish to continue having interesting talks at these meetings, a Speaker Arranger is essential. Currently talks are booked until the end of the year.

Please contact me if you would like further information about this role.