

Thrapston U3A – In the Beginning

Until 2012 those Thrapston residents who had joined University of the Third Age were members of neighbouring groups, mostly Oundle and a few of Higham and Rushden. A number of town councillors, notably Karen Draycott, Val Carter and David Read were keen to establish a branch in Thrapston and were given the blessing of the Town Council to explore the process. The East Midlands Regional Group provided the support of Liz Wilson the Regional Trustee and she, together with a representative from each of the Higham and Rushden, Oundle and Wellingborough committees guided the councillors through the development process.

At the beginning of May 2012, a meeting was held in the Plaza to establish interest in setting up the U3A. Information was given about the University of the Third Age by the local representatives and questionnaires were available for participants to express their interest in membership and committee roles and to suggest possible groups. Sixty-nine questionnaires were received and from these the first steering committee volunteers were extracted and the first eight groups evolved. These were Gardening, Books, Bridge, Theatre trips and outings, Luncheons, Walking/Rambling and Play Reading.

The first steering committee meeting was held in the Plaza on Thursday 31 May 2012. The officers were appointed including the Chair, Glyn Hill (after July 2012), Acting Chair, David Read (until July 2012) and Vice-Chair, Veronica Norwood. The Business Secretary was Liz Treacy, Membership secretary Jo Hancock, Treasurer Bryan Elliott, Groups Co-ordinator, David Read, Speaker Seeker, Richard Swindall, web site and newsletter editor Glyn Hill. Rachel Thompson joined later as Publicity Officer

Liz Wilson outlined our tasks for the year to come. We would serve as a Steering Committee until May 2013 when an AGM would take place and all members of the committee would then need to be elected, we would need to compose a constitution, and this would be proposed at the AGM and voted for by the membership. Thrapston U3A would also need to apply to the Third Age Trust for temporary membership, provide a list of members in three months' time and from then on make payments to the TAT for the magazine, Third Age Matters, and our membership subscription.

Membership cards, a logo design, application forms and bank account application were also be arranged by the new committee.

Advised by Liz Wilson, £16 was agreed as a membership fee with £12.50 for associate membership (those who were already members of other U3As). She also outlined the format of the first members meeting, which would comprise mainly an introduction to the steering committee, an introduction to the University of the Third Age, enrolment of our members, interest group signing up and tea and coffee.

The steering committee met in June and decided that steering committee meetings would be monthly on the first Friday and member's meetings monthly on the third.

The Inaugural members meeting took place on 22 June when 66 full and 19 associate members were enrolled. Ten groups (Patchwork, Card-making and Family history had been added) were available for signing up.

On July 20th, 2012, our first general meeting with Eric Franklin, a local historian speaking on the "20th Century History of Thrapston. In these first meetings, group leaders were encouraged to briefly speak about their groups.



Membership grew rapidly, by an average of ten per month and by August we had 100 and by December 143 members had enrolled. At the AGM in May 2013, the outgoing chair reported that we had 175 members and 26 interest groups.