



NORTHERN IRELAND REGION NEWS NOVEMBER 2008

Introduction

Communication! Communication! Communication!

You are a member of a particular U3A but that doesn't mean that you cannot benefit from what goes on in other U3As and, with 700 individual U3As throughout the UK and over 200,000 members, there is a need for an organised chain of communications. Northern Ireland has led the way by having a regional structure, while others have local networks or informal links with their neighbours, and the regional model is currently being developed in GB. Our structure is:

**Member
U3A
Regional Executive
Third Age Trust**

The Third Age Trust is the national body which promotes and supports U3As throughout the UK and if you want to find out more about it, check the website at www.u3a.org.uk. Now that the capitalisation charge is about to be raised to £3.50 you may want to explore ways of getting value for money from the Trust, by using the Resource Centre, the Online Courses or the various literature it provides. Most of you are probably concerned only with events in your own U3A and learn of what goes on elsewhere through U3A News and Sources. However there has been a need to keep NI members informed of what is happening here in Northern Ireland and, to meet that, it is proposed that a regional newsheet will be provided.

This is the first, very basic, issue and your suggestions and contributions to input for future issues will be most welcome.

Action: If your U3A is doing anything new or interesting e-mail details to smagee99@tiscali.co.uk.

News from the Third Age Trust

Regional structure

If you have any issues you want to raise at regional level, the Regional Executive is the first port of call and you should contact the Secretary, Ann Hayes. As part of the reorganisation of U3As in GB into regional groupings, a new allocation of responsibilities has taken place. The Third Age Trust contributes to the costs of the Regional Trustee (Sheila Magee, Downe) and the Regional Education and Development Contact (Gabrielle Deans, Foyle). If you want help or advice on day to day matters within your U3A or have identified a potential new U3A, contact Gabrielle. Sheila is charged with raising issues from the Regional Executive to the Trust and communicating back about events at national level, hence this newsletter.

National publicity for U3As

The Trust provides a range of promotional leaflets and posters but these need updating and renewing. Currently a DVD is being prepared for next year and this will then be available to all of you for promotional work. Also a promotional brochure is in the early stages of preparation. The object of this is to have something glossy and attention-catching to show sponsors, government, local authorities, educational bodies, retirement advisers, etc.

Action: To ensure coverage of activities in Northern Ireland you are asked to provide photographs of your U3A taking part in interesting activities -- not just a posed group photograph, but something with a Wow Factor!

Growing Old Disgracefully

The marvellously named National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is running a digital photographic competition open to anyone in the UK aged 55 or over, closing date 16th January 2009. See www.niace.org.uk. *“This is your chance to prove that you can still enjoy learning and handle the latest technology – age is not a barrier. Whether you belong to a singing, rock climbing or drama group let us see how you are Growing Old Disgracefully.”*

Conference 2009



The 2009 national conference is likely to be held in Edinburgh at Heriot Watt at the beginning of September. Realistically this event will never come to Northern Ireland and this may be the closest it will be, so make plans to attend but beware that the contingent from NI has established a reputation which needs to be upheld.

Summer Schools 2009

There will be two Summer Schools during the summer in Newport (20-23 July) and Cirencester (24-27 August). Booking forms have been sent to all secretaries.

News from the Northern Ireland Region

Current membership

There are now 14 U3As in Northern Ireland with a membership of 3,300, not bad considering there are only 3,700 members in Scotland.

New Regional Executive

The constitution of the regional committee requires office holders to step down after a term of office of three years and consequently nominations are being sought for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Nomination forms will be sent out to all U3As early in 2009

Action: Nominees to be sought.

Glens & Dalriada Study Day

On 29th and 30th April, Glens & Dalriada are holding a regional event in Cushendall to which all U3As are invited. After the Regional AGM in the morning and early afternoon of Wednesday 29th, the study event will begin with a walk-talk about the area, dinner and entertainment, followed, the next day, by around 4 workshops on specific topics. There are lots of B&Bs in the area and anyone booking the study day will be sent a list of these.

The likely cost will be £15 per head for the study day plus an optional £10 for dinner. Accommodation will be extra.

Action: Nothing yet but mark the dates in your diary.

Shared Learning

What is Shared Learning? This involves projects between U3As and museums, libraries or similar public bodies which may be of mutual benefit to all concerned. The first Shared Learning project in Northern Ireland involved North Down & Ards and Belfast U3As and the Ulster Museum. (See: "Shared Learning Projects -2" which Ann Hayes recently sent to all secretaries.) For an example of Shared Learning in action see page 4 below.

Action: Nominations for a Regional Coordinator to be submitted to Ann Hayes by 7th January 2009

Stormont

The Regional Executive have approached the NI Assembly to make a case for concessionary rates for older learners at Further Education Colleges. On June 26th Sir Reg Empey issued a press release welcoming "college fee concessions for pensioners". He stated that the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (2006) had made it impossible for colleges to continue to offer concessionary fees solely on the basis of age. Now the criterion is means tested, based on benefits received. However, in the press release, he extended the qualification to include those who qualify for the new Rate Relief Scheme.

Action: If you are 70 or over and live alone make sure that you receive the concession on any fees you pay to a Further Education College.

Positive Ageing in Ireland

Members of the Executive and the Newry U3A attended a conference in Dublin on 28th of September and met, amongst others, Eric Midwinter, one of the co-founders of the U3A movement in the UK, and Dr Anne Neville from Age Action Ireland.



Older People's Advocate

In December 2007 the First and Deputy First Ministers unveiled plans for a Commissioner for Older People "to defend the rights and interests of the elderly" On November 3rd Dame Joan Harbison was unveiled as the 'Older People's Advocate' ahead of the creation of a Commissioner to lobby for the elderly.

Grundtvig Projects

Representatives of the Executive and Newry U3A met Dr Anne Neville, the Development Officer from Age Action Ireland to discuss options for forming partnerships with other countries to develop shared projects. These would be funded through the Grundtvig system (see www.grundtvig.org.uk), involving travel by Seniors to learn from partner organisations in different countries. Information sessions about the process, including ways of forming partnerships, will be held in Dublin in January and more details of this will be sent to Secretaries when available.

News from the Northern Ireland U3As

Bridge



On 17 October, Causeway U3A hosted over 60 players from across the region at the 2008 Northern Ireland U3A Bridge Congress. Groups from Newry, North Down & Ards, Belfast, Ballymena and Glens & Dalriada were welcomed by Causeway Chairman Judith Hegan to compete in a pleasant day of duplicate bridge.

Shared Learning

Earlier this year History Group of North Down & Ards, led by Joyce Gibson, approached the Ulster Folk Museum with a view to starting up a new Shared Learning project. Topics suggested were:

- Household gadgets at the turn of the Century
- What was life like for the physically disabled?
- Journalism and media, particularly the history of the cinema.
- The changing role of women
- Life in a wealthy household.
- The fate of the poor and destitute in Ireland.

Action: If you are interested in participating in this project, contact Joyce Gibson on 028 9146 2043.

This is the first of these newsletters. The idea is that if you have anything you would like to share with other U3As, let me know and I will include it here. We could compile a list of good speakers but, on the other hand, we might not want to overload the ones we get. As a start, can I recommend contacting Emma Thorpe who is the Education Development Officer for Northern Ireland Screen. Emma gave us a free presentation of film from the archive which can be tailored to local requirements – we included the homecoming of the Sam Maguire in 1968 and Smithfield in the 1950s.

Sheila Magee, Northern Ireland Trustee, November 2008