

# Sheffield

## U 3 A



## The Story Continues

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# SU3A Chairmen

<b>1986 - 1987</b>	<b>Betty James</b>
<b>1988 - 1989</b>	<b>Edward Davis</b>
<b>1990 - 1991</b>	<b>Mary Clark</b>
<b>1991 - 1993</b>	<b>Frank Gutsell</b>
<b>1994 - 1996</b>	<b>John Brennan</b>
<b>1996 - 1998</b>	<b>Jack Holland</b>
<b>1998 - 1999</b>	<b>Julian Oakley</b>
<b>1999 - 2001</b>	<b>Philip Jones</b>
<b>2001 - 2003</b>	<b>John Richards</b>
<b>2003 - 2004</b>	<b>John Roddis</b>
<b>2005 - 2006</b>	<b>Helen Cowen</b>
<b>2006 - 2009</b>	<b>Joan Keogh</b>
<b>2009 - 2011</b>	<b>Shelagh Woolliscroft</b>
<b>2011 -</b>	<b>Denise West</b>

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# Sheffield U3A - The Story Continues

## The History of SU3A from 2001 to 2011

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## Foreword

In my capacity as Chairman of Sheffield University of the Third Age (SU3A) from 2009 to 2011, I am delighted to have the opportunity of welcoming you to 'The Story Continues'.

Back in 2009 Roy Darlison, who had worked with others to compile the first history of SU3A - aptly entitled 'The Story so far ...', suggested that our Silver Jubilee Year of 2011 presented a timely opportunity to produce a sequel.

But who could capture the many flavours of the past ten years?

Peter Barclay, who was due to step down from his Committee post as Publicity Coordinator, kindly offered to undertake the task. Peter is a keen writer who has coordinated several SU3A creative writing Groups. He is familiar with many different aspects of SU3A life. He and his wife Ann undertook extensive research during 2009; and, many interviews later, he has produced a faithful record. In putting together this edition Peter has benefitted from the support of Roger Heesterman, former *Links* Editor, whose desk top publishing skills are the envy of us all. Our grateful thanks must go to both of them for their fine achievement.

This sequel covers a very busy ten year period in which SU3A's membership has grown from around 1,900 to just under 3,000. The running of such a big organisation has made greater demands on the Executive Committee and on key posts, such as the Membership Records Officer. Fundamentally, however, SU3A has not changed. It is still run by its members, for its members. It still functions without either premises or paid staff. The tenets of collective learning and social interaction remain the same.

Peter's account pays tribute to the core strengths of our organisation, namely the energy and commitment of those who help to run it. There have been several hundred volunteers over the years: sadly it is not possible to name them all. But they know who they are and I hope they realise how much their work has been appreciated.

***Shelagh Woolliscroft***

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# Introduction

1986: When it all began! When Betty James became our first Chairman, that cold January night 25 years ago.

They were like cave explorers peering into the darkness, unable to comprehend the size of the new organisation. Those early years of SU3A were admirably recorded by Roy Darlison in his book 'The Story so far ...'. This work describes the key features between 2001 and 2011; and includes something of our Silver Jubilee celebrations.

Retirement for many comes as a relief, but there are inbuilt anxieties. Can I manage on a pension? Will I miss the comradeship of the workplace? Joining SU3A helps to dispel these fears. Retirement is a kind of re-birthing. New interests grow and there is a joy in making a fresh circle of friends. For many, a SU3A Group becomes their oyster and a new set of loyalties begins to emerge.

Since those early days, SU3A has continued to expand and evolve. During the decade from 2001 to 2011 there were great changes, membership continued to grow and with it the range of Group interests developed quite astonishingly.

When Shelagh Woolliscroft invited me to edit this work, my first question was to ask members what were the major events that highlighted this period. It was no surprise that dominant were occasions that brought friends together to share like-minded interests.

I am grateful to Shelagh for her patience and encouragement, to Roger who has taken charge of graphic design and final production and Myra Smith for proof-reading the final draft. I thank them both for their friendship and constant support. My gratitude also extends to members who welcomed me to their homes during the spring of 2010 and provided the occasional cuppa, as well as valuable information on SU3A activities.

The 25 years of SU3A have witnessed amazing advances in digital technology. Many members' homes are well equipped with up to date computers and digital cameras. Roger's colourful cover design is based on members' photographs. I hope that this history, in which I have tried to record the splendiferous story of Sheffield U3A from 2001 to 2011, proves to be stimulating and of renewed interest.

***Peter Barclay***

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# Chapter 1

## Highlights of the Last Decade

Following a period of debate on the future of SU3A in the 1990's, the Executive Committee was anxious to learn what the membership thought. Were they satisfied with the organisation? Was everyone 'sitting comfortably'?

### *Membership Survey*

Tony Bullivant undertook a survey and published his results in the April 2002 issue of *Links*. Social contact through special interests was the most important reason for joining. Acquisition of knowledge and a desire to maintain an active mind were also highly valued. At that time less than a third of the membership used the internet. These responses were reflected in a report in 1996 by the Executive Committee which stated -

'We feel that the heart and soul of U3A in Sheffield lies in Group activity. The role of the Committee in relation to Groups is that of facilitator.'

Perhaps the most touching remark in Tony's report came from a member who said -

'U3A has been a lifeline to me ..... I would just like to say thank you. Your excellent U3A has given me a reason to enjoy life again.'

This person's comments emphasise a most valuable ingredient of our success story: unrivalled friendships.

Sheffield is surrounded by remarkably beautiful countryside and there is a long tradition in the city of enjoying natural scenery through walking and allied activities. As far back as 1986, when SU3A was first formed, Natural History with Austin Brackenbury was listed amongst the first Groups. From this, Frank and Yvonne Gutsell started a Walking Group in 1989 that grew so popular that eventually it split into A Group and

B Group. Very soon there were others. *Links* 98, published in 2002, listed nine Stroller Groups, A to J, as well as Walking SE, Sunday Walkers and, for the intrepid, Walking 18+ miles. Walking activities continued to proliferate throughout the decade and in 2008 and 2009 some of our Groups took part in the Walking Festival organised by Sheffield City Council.



**Fig 1: SU3A walk at Longnor** (Frank Mellor)

But hill walking presents risks and one of our Millennium Celebrations ended in disaster, due to bad weather in the Peak Park. The walkers in SU3A had decided to present a cheque to the Edale Mountain Rescue Team as our token of thanks. Unfortunately a member out walking fell shortly after the presentation and dislocated his right shoulder. Later the victim, Keith Haslam, wrote in *Links* -

'All I can say now is how grateful I am to my many friends on the walk, the rescue team, doctor, RAF and hospital; and also to thank all who telephoned later once the grapevine had swung into action. What a great organisation U3A is for making friends!'

In spite of occasional mishaps, interest in the countryside continued to flourish and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

To mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SU3A in 2006, a celebratory lunch was arranged at the Grosvenor Hotel, with over 170 members attending. Shirley Howarth, our

20<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary

first Secretary, was made a Life Member, Lin Jonas came from National Office and our special guest was Sheffield artist Joe Scarborough. He entertained us with stories of his early years in Pitsmoor and his life as a miner. He loved rock and roll music, pub life and the colourful life of people he met there. His bright paintings were packed with people crowded into small spaces, actively involved together in a variety of ways. The audience clearly appreciated Joe's talk.

### *Askham Bryan Days*

Two other events drew support from a variety of U3As from across Yorkshire. These Regional get-togethers were organised at Askham Bryan College, near York. The first, in 2004, was not well supported by members of SU3A; but, thanks to transport organised by Shirley Marney, the second Askham Bryan Day in 2007 proved highly popular. There was so much to see, all totally free of charge. A variety of dancing - line dancing, circle dancing and square dancing. The choir and instrumental group from Swanland U3A proved outstandingly worthwhile. Hessle U3A's Magic Circle, held in the bar, was quite astonishing. There were art and craft exhibitions, gardening exhibitions and an afternoon ramble, to name just a few of the diverse interests of the Ridings Region. The sun shone and we all returned to Sheffield suitably inspired.

### *Funding*

None of these activities of course is without cost. Somehow they needed to be paid for. Membership fees remained at £7 for many years, rose briefly to £8 and were raised to £10 in 2011. A valuable form of finance was Government Gift Aid introduced in 2008. Because a large number of members regularly signed up, the extra income made it possible to provide equipment for Groups, to add to central stocks of equipment and finance special projects, such as the monthly lecture series and the Jubilee celebrations. Initially applications were made to a Gift Aid Working Party, chaired by Roy Darlison, who advised the Executive Committee on the suitability of requests. This role is now undertaken by the General Coordinator and Treasurer.

### *2,000th Member*

For some years we had waited wondering whether we would ever acquire a 2,000<sup>th</sup> member. At last in 2004

she appeared on the scene. Ruth Abel contacted BBC Radio Sheffield and Sheffield Newspapers to mark the official welcome by John Roddis and his SU3A Committee. Cameras flashed, microphones were waved and Joan Keogh OBE was welcomed in style. Joan had enjoyed a distinguished career as a civil servant and university academic. She was elected to the SU3A Committee soon afterwards and continued as Chair of Sheffield U3A between 2006 and 2009.



**Fig 2: John Roddis welcoming SU3A's 2,000th member, Joan Keogh OBE** (© Sheffield Newspapers Ltd)

Sadly, Joan was taken ill and died in the spring of 2010. A remarkable person missed by many members.

As people continued to join and the number of Groups increased, the alphabetic list of Groups published in *Links* became a source of confusion to new applicants. Not only were they forced to pore over a list of titles, but having found a Group, sometimes the Group was unable to accept new faces. Norman Smith pondered over this and came up with a simple alternative, 'families' of Groups with similar interests. From August 2008 this system came into operation and the list on the back pages of *Links* was replaced by fourteen sets. A year later, with the subsequent assistance of Christine Barton, a system for denoting accessibility and availability was also devised and Roger Heesterman redesigned the lists and replaced them with a new set of 'centre pages', intended as a pull-out section for members to keep to hand.

*Links*

Joining a new organisation is relatively simple, keeping in touch and up to date with news can prove more complex. In the first few years most members knew one another and readily joined in to help the new movement. Over the years communication proved more difficult, but changes in technology sometimes helped.

*'U3A News'* A notable case arose in 2002 when the 'cascader system' proved too problematic to continue. Teresa McLaren, the Committee Member responsible for delivering 'U3A News' from National Office, reported problems in the distribution of magazines to members. The 'cascader system' had proved slow, in spite of the best intentions of the Executive Committee. Fortunately this was replaced by direct postal deliveries from National Office to members, much to the relief of most people.

When Margaret Briddon took over as Editor of the SU3A newsletter in 1995 she introduced publishing skills and converted a duplicated newsletter into a more attractive magazine format. Later, Nigel Sandford took over and introduced a slightly more literary slant, with short stories and poetry by SU3A members.

In June 2003 Myra and Norman Smith followed on from Nigel, with Tony Bullivant remaining as Deputy Editor. They continued with the assistance of Roger Heesterman as Deputy and it was during this period that more photographs appeared in *Links*. Doubtless digital cameras were coming into greater use in outdoor activities and Travel Group holidays. Roger continued as Editor from the Spring of 2007 until 2010, when John Williams replaced him.

*Website* As technology advanced, the Executive Committee began to consider the potential of a SU3A website. In February 2003 Tony Marsh, the newly appointed Web Master, wrote an article in *Links* about the embryonic site. He suggested that Groups might publish news of forthcoming programmes and that the web site had other possible advantages.

Later, Norman Smith took over, creating a new structure as part of a radical redesign. Following Norman's death Clare Chiba became Web Coordinator, continuing Norman's work by encouraging greater contributions from Groups. Interest grew month by month, with Group programmes and splendid photography enhancing Group pages. Clare updated the site every few days, presenting a lively picture of SU3A activities through the site's Home Page.

Throughout its history, the membership of SU3A has continued to expand. Whilst in 1990 there were only 220 members, by 1999 numbers had increased to over 1,400 and by 2008 to over 2,400. Finally, in the spring of 2011 there were 2,826 members in Sheffield U3A, one of the largest U3As in the United Kingdom.

*Growth in  
Membership*

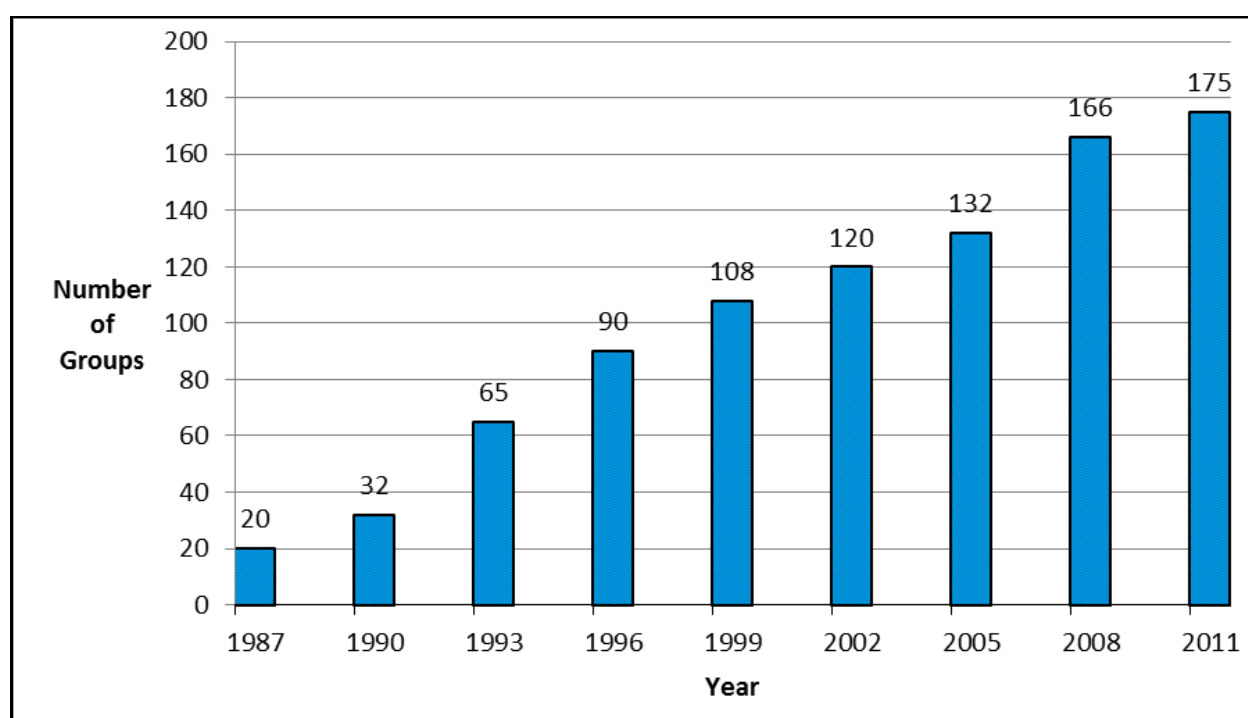
Thought, innovation, teamwork and close friendships remained the hallmark of SU3A. How these worked out in practice will be discussed later in this publication.

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## Chapter 2

### Expanding Groups

During the spring of 2010 a study was made of the way Groups developed between the years 2000 and 2010. The Family Group system formed the basis of this research. In general, as membership levels rose, so more Groups were formed;



**Fig 3: SU3A - Growth in the Number of Groups**

though in a few cases Groups were forced to discontinue due to aging and ill health. In every Group the role of the Coordinator remained vital to its success. It was noted that in several the same person continued to serve for 10 years or more - an astonishing mark of dedication and interest.

The following notes do not include the Open Access Groups, which are discussed in Chapter 3.

#### *Arts and Crafts*

Arts and Crafts, Art SE, Aspects of Art I and II, Outdoor Sketching I and II, Patch & Quilt and Woodworking & Woodcarving continued to be old favourites. The three

Art Groups offered help with drawing and painting; and Cards 'R' Us, Handwork and Crafts I were established. With advancing technology, Digital Photography suddenly became popular and appeared in our 2005 list. In more recent years there was a new interest in Architecture, with the formation of two Groups. Handwork and Craft II, Knitting and Looking at Art featured in later lists.

Bird Watching remained active in two Groups, with regular meetings and occasional trips abroad.

*Bird  
Watching*

Cards and Board Games continued to be popular with seven Groups active across the city at different times of the week. An innovation was Bridge at Home, a Group devised by Christine Barton to meet her own personal needs. Rummikub was another new interest. Gerald Cartwright organised Contract Whist and Double 12 Dominoes activities for many years; and Chess prospered under the guidance of Sheila Hardie.

*Cards and  
Board  
Games*

Discussion, Philosophy and Religion continued to appeal to the more intellectual members, but humour was there as well. 'Sugar & Spice', discussing women's issues, together with two Philosophy Groups and Today's World appeared in the 2005 listing. Wealth and Poverty, as well as another Group known as Ideas, proved popular. Frank Abel's Environment Group slightly changed its name and became the Environment Discussion group.

*Discussion,  
Philosophy  
and Religion*

As usual, the Gardening Groups continued to prosper, with talks and visits adding to members' enthusiasm. The latest Group to become established was Gardening Aspen, based in Hillsborough, with June Pollard as Coordinator.

*Gardening*

There was an expansion of History Groups. Whilst the 2000 list in *Links* showed nine Groups, by late 2010 the number of Groups had expanded to 15. This was due in part to specialisations, such as Classical Civilisation and Military History, coming into force and there was a surge of interest in researching Family History. As SU3A

*History*

expanded into new areas of the city, Local History proved extremely popular. Help from staff at the Local Studies Library and City Archives was much appreciated.

*Languages* As usual Language studies proved very worthwhile with new subjects coming into action. Whilst French, German, Spanish and Italian were always popular subjects with members; lists for the last six or seven years showed an increasing interest in Latin. Even more surprising was the emergence of Portuguese for Fun, Modern Greek, Welsh and Beginners' Sanskrit. Foreign travel, family members living abroad and a rising awareness of our cultural heritage probably stimulated the formation of these Groups.

*Literature and Drama* Literature and Drama activities have formed an important part of SU3A since its inception. In 2000 there were only 10 Groups listed in *Links*, by 2005 this had risen to 13, but in the 2010 listings the number of Literature and Drama Groups had risen to 22. There was a spate of new Book Groups in the last five years, in addition to an on-going interest in Novel Reading Groups. Poetry and Creative Writing continued to thrive, but there emerged more specialised interests in Shakespeare and in Film Appreciation, under the leadership of Kay Nicholson and Lesley Dixon. A further initiative was the establishment of the Literature Network reported in another part of this publication.

*Music* Music was a small, but important part of SU3A, due principally to the Listening to Music Groups; with Brenda Keeling, Ken Seal, Ray Cottam and David Andrews providing sterling service over a long period of time. In the last few years Enjoying Opera became a well attended interest, promoted initially by the late Nigel Sandford and afterwards coordinated by John Williams. Though singing was admired in other U3As, Sheffield members seemed unable to form a Group until Irene Lees, assisted by Ken Stringfellow and Brian Bezant, established our own Singing for Pleasure Group in 2009.

In listing Physical Activities, walking and strolling are not included, but form a separate family grouping discussed later. Outstanding amongst the activity Groups are the two interests promoted for very many years by Keith Alcock and Marjorie Michael. Keith encouraged bowling in different parts of the city, both crown green and indoor. Marjorie had encouraged Country Dancing since the early days of SU3A. Dancing



**Fig 4: Crown Green Bowling** (Peter Barclay)

had been an integral part of her holiday activities and the enjoyment of dance soon became a regular part of the emerging SU3A. Whilst Keep Fit and Table Tennis have been long-standing favourites, newly emerging Groups included Tai Chi and Arabic Dance, both aspects of a widening cultural diversity in the city. Croquet became a very popular activity during the summer months thanks to the efforts of Peter Jones and his assistants.

Science and Technology covered a wide variety of studies. Thanks to the enterprise of Mike Bennett and his friends, the Science & Technology Group proved very popular, with a highly specialised lecture programme and occasional visits to sites of particular interest.

*Science and  
Technology*

However, two entirely new Groups came into being. Due to the determination of Dan Higbid, Geology started during the last five years and continued with a specialist tutor on outdoor trips. Secondly, the Sustainable Development Group arose from growing worldwide

concerns over climate change. Members were encouraged to consider global issues, as well as consider practical ways of altering their own lifestyles.

### *Social*

In 2005 a new family grouping emerged. This was the Social family grouping, based mainly on evening activities. Although primarily aimed at providing new activities for those members who felt isolated in the evening and at weekends; they had the added bonus of encouraging potential members who were still working part-time. Some Groups specialised in dining out, trying a variety of international foods; whilst others enjoyed theatre visits, discussions and more informal events at members' homes.

### *Walking*

Walking is integral to Sheffield, once called 'the dirty picture in a golden frame' - but in fact not so dirty these days, with better controls over air pollution. The walking tradition remains, with the medical profession extolling the virtues of outdoor activity for people of all ages.



**Fig 5: Walking Group F at Bretton** (Frank Mellor)

Members were fortunate in living close to the Peak District, Britain's premier National Park. In the spring of 1990, Frank and Yvonne Gutsell tried to establish a Walking Group, but failed to attract much enthusiasm at first. However, they persisted and interest increased. By 2010 there were over 30 walking Groups in SU3A, catering for a wide range of abilities. With the beautiful White and Dark Peaks to choose from, who could blame them?

Cars continued to be the most popular form of transport to walking areas, but at least four Groups steadfastly used public transport. For the walking Groups and allied countryside activities, the 'great outdoors' provided an easy solution.

Finding suitable venues for other Groups remained an on-going problem, not easily addressed; though several solutions emerged. The obvious was meeting at members' homes, always assuming that they were willing to oblige. For larger Groups it was necessary to hire premises, such as church or community halls. Occasionally the friendly landlord of a local pub found space for a small Group, but perhaps most suitable of all were meeting rooms in local public libraries. Sheffield City Libraries came to our help on many occasions, providing rooms at affordable prices and proving to be staunch allies of SU3A. We are indebted to the Library Service for this.

### *Venues*

Since 2010 when the study was conducted, there have been inevitable changes in the pattern of Group developments. It would be interesting to repeat the work in five years' time to see how the pattern of development has changed again.

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## Chapter 3

### Do I Need to Book?

**I**n his history of the first 15 years of SU3A 'The Story So Far' Roy Darlison defined Open Access Groups. As far back as October 1986 meetings were planned that allowed any SU3A member to take part without the constraints of more specialised Group membership. A Christmas lunch each year, theatre visits and coffee mornings were items open to all. Clearly financial commitments, as well as the practicality of fitting everyone in, needed to be thought through. From these early beginnings arose a variety of Open Access programmes devised by groups of SU3A enthusiasts. The following notes discuss the development of Open Access from 2001 to the present day. Members wishing to read about earlier activities should refer to 'The Story So Far' for greater detail.

#### *Theatre Group*

The Theatre Group continued until the end of 2007. Joe and Betty Cotterill organised regular visits to the theatre and to the annual Musical Cavalcade, but ill health forced them to look for replacement Coordinators. Highlights of this period were the Worsborough Mystery Plays; an outstanding production of *The Tempest*, with David Jacobi, at the Crucible; and a visit to London to see *Les Misérables* at the Palace Theatre. From June 2004 to December 2007 Mike Cowen took charge, helped by Brenda Barwell and Jean Kendall. They concentrated on matinee performances, suspecting that many people did not like coming into the city at night. At the end of 2007, after a very successful period, the Theatre Group closed down due to declining interest.

Where did Derek Shipley's enthusiasm for music stem from? The answer: Gilbert and Sullivan (G&S) opera. He recalled many memories of sitting in the gods enjoying G&S productions, learning the words and taking part in school productions.

In 1997, with a group of friends, he and his wife set up the Classical Concertgoers'. Their aim was to enjoy live, top quality performances at affordable prices. For an all-in price, which included coach transport costs, Derek and Maureen Shipley organised a great variety of visits - mainly to the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, home of the Hallé Orchestra, and the Birmingham Symphony Hall; but also the occasional trip to the De Montford Hall in Leicester and, of course, the Buxton Gilbert and Sullivan Festival. Music from across the globe was a constant source of delight, with background information supplied by Derek en-route.

*Classical  
Concertgoers'*

For many people, lunch with a group of friends, together with an interesting talk by a distinguished speaker, seemed ideal. Between 2001 and 2009 Barbara Steel and Dorothy Manners provided their Lunch and Lecture programme at three locations to great acclaim. The locations were Tapton Hall Masonic Lodge in 2001 and 2003, City College in September 2002 only and The Moat House / Sheffield Park Hotel to the present day. In 2010 Doreen Bezant, Brian Bezant and Vera Dyer agreed to take over from Barbara and Dorothy as organisers of these activities.

Over the years there have been a wide variety of speakers at The Lunch and Lecture meetings. Some speakers dealt with topics of local interest, such as the work of the Sheffield Assay Office; whilst others, such as mountaineers and pioneer travellers, ranged far and wide. Perhaps outstanding was a talk by Rosemary McCulloch on her work with the BBC. At that time (2005) she was Vice Chairman of the Third Age Trust. In the spring of 2011 Peter Thornton attracted over 190 members to the Lunch and Lecture Club. He spoke about the early history of the Thornton confectionary business in Sheffield and how it developed into a famous chocolate business after the Second World War. His departure some years later was dealt with in a frank manner and, at the end of his slide show, Peter answered members' questions about his life and varied interests.

*Lunch and  
Lecture*

<i>Literature Network</i>	<p>After attending the U3A National Conference in 2000, Rita Brent decided it was time for Sheffield to set up a Literature Network. A small committee was formed to plan two talks per year on subjects of general interest to literature and drama groups of different kinds. In October 2003 Liz Cashdan was invited to speak on 'Jane Austen and her Contemporaries'. Over 60 people attended, which made a good start.</p> <p>Since then there have been regular attendances of between 50 and 75 members at Shirley House, a congenial venue on Psalter Lane, Nether Edge. There have been visiting speakers from the local universities; a fascinating talk by Paul Allen, from Radio 3 and Radio 4, on the Theatre in Yorkshire; and an outstandingly successful speaker on Philip Larkin (October 2009). The lady was the late Jean Hartley, who knew the poet well and, with her East Yorkshire husband, agreed to publish his work before the young Philip Larkin became a famous writer.</p> <p>In 2005, in response to members' increasing interest in creative writing, Pat Parkin published an anthology of SU3A writings entitled 'Write Away'. These were mainly short stories and poems by members and were received with an enthusiastic response. In 2009 Rita Brent announced her retirement from the Literature Network Committee. Her contribution to the development of SU3A over many years had been of immense value.</p>
<i>Quiz Nights</i>	<p>In lighter vein, a variety of Quiz Nights were organised by Marion Edmondson, which were open to all SU3A members and their friends. Beside their social value, they helped raise money for a variety of charities - including the Edale Mountain Rescue Team, the Air Ambulance Service, the Sheffield Children's Hospital and the United Nations Children's Fund.</p>
<i>Travel Group</i>	<p>The foresight and dedication of its leaders made each of these Open Access Groups of enormous value to those SU3A members who wished to pay for the services on offer. In addition to the above, the enormous contribution of the Travel Group started in the spring of</p>

1990 and was led by Yvonne Gutsell for some years. These activities remained ever popular and are discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

An entirely new initiative took place in January 2010 when the first monthly Drop-In was introduced by the then Chairman, Shelagh Woolliscroft. All members were required to do was sign in, collect a free cup of tea or coffee and join a table. The United Reformed Church, close to the Crucible Theatre, proved an ideal location; with a cheerful café located at street level. Here prospective members could feel welcome, find out more about SU3A and informally start to make new friends.

### *Drop-Ins*

The monthly Drop-Ins also created an opportunity for Executive Committee members to discuss urgent business or help sort out any Group problems. On some occasions a Drop-In meeting could lead to the formation of an entirely new SU3A Group. Most importantly Drop-In mornings enabled the general membership to chat informally with SU3A officers: a perfect example of democracy in action.

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## Chapter 4

### Those Fantastic Trips

**I**n 1991 the SU3A Travel Group had appointed a new Travel Coordinator in Yvonne Gutsell. Yvonne and her husband Frank organised a great variety of holidays during the next 11 years, some in Europe, others much further afield. Their last long-haul holidays were in Australia and New Zealand and, lastly, in Canada. Many older members recall these with great affection.

Following Yvonne's resignation, Shirley Marney became Travel Coordinator in 2000. Shirley had a background in nursing, having been a ward sister, midwife and health visitor. She had lived both in the United States and in Australia.

Her trips abroad were memorable. She always believed in listening to members and organising holidays which they suggested to her. She valued holiday reunions and encouraged her friends to take part in social activities at her house in Bradway. Contact with other U3As was often a distinguishing feature of Shirley's activities. Her Group holidays included meetings with U3As in King's Lynn, Norwich, Benidorm and Prague; as well as many other towns. Shirley arranged a wide variety of holidays, especially long-haul trips abroad, with South Africa being her favourite destination. Her European ventures were also appreciated.

Barbara Robertshaw joined the Travel Committee in 2002. She was able to bring considerable experience of arranging day trips and holidays from another voluntary organisation and has organised a variety of short breaks and day trips for SU3A. Her short breaks included Cardiff and South Wales and an especially memorable four days in Berlin – a city vibrant with interest. Within the Berlin trip Barbara and her husband

John arranged a day visit to the historic town of Potsdam. Barbara was brought up in Germany and organised the trip with meticulous care. She took over from Shirley Marney in 2010 as Travel Coordinator.

But sometimes in SU3A it is the quiet administrator in the background who plays an equally vital role. When he retired as Travel Treasurer in 2008, Ken Parkin was awarded SU3A Life Membership. During a period of 10 years he had handled over £1 million for SU3A, a fact that surprised everyone. Fortunately, Barry De Roek agreed to take over from him the following year.



**Fig 6: Berlin 2008** (Derek Shipley)

The success of the SU3A stems from the enthusiasm and dedication of its leaders. So what motivated them so strongly? What was it about their lives that fired their interest in travel?

Margaret Bullivant had always enjoyed taking people to places of interest and, since joining the Travel Committee, organised numerous day trips and short breaks, mainly in the UK, with an emphasis on social history and development. These aspects were especially true when she led a holiday to Kraków in Poland in 2010.

Peter Frost, as a young man, enjoyed travelling in Canada with the RAF and later sailed round the world in his own boat. 'Things that move' proved a lifelong fascination for Peter, and he specialised in SU3A visits connected with canals and railways, including the North Yorkshire railway, where lunch was served in Pullman style - his favourite!

Derek Shipley was Secretary to the Travel Committee and contributed greatly to the smooth running of the Group. When he joined the Travel Committee he specialised in day trips in which two places of interest



**Fig 7: Day Trip to Ironbridge, 2007** (Derek Shipley)

were usually included.

Val Wiley joined the Travel Committee in 2008 and organised a number of day trips in Britain, including very popular visits to the town of Beverley and to Burton Constable Hall in East Yorkshire.

In SU3A Travel, there has been an abundance of trips available to all members - some day events, others for longer periods. However, with the problems of a weakening pound in 2009 and 2010, those highly ambitious holidays abroad became less attractive, whilst others in Britain became increasingly popular.

#### *Group Holidays*

As our U3A continued to expand its Groups, so their own programmes became increasingly ambitious. Day trips were frequently arranged, whilst Group holidays became increasingly popular amongst some of them. The three holidays below serve as examples from a wider range of SU3A Group ventures during the last decade -

- In 2004 Margaret Briddon arranged a visit to France for her Art Group. They were based in Paris where they explored a variety of galleries, including the Louvre and the Pompidou Centre, and later visited Claude Monet's garden at Giverny.
- In Walking Group F the pace was demanding, but there was a strong sense of comradeship and walking holidays were arranged each year. The Lake District was popular for several years, with camping and mountain walking activities.

In 2010 their first venture in Austria was reported enthusiastically in *Links* that Autumn.

- Walking Group H had an impressive record of holiday ventures in addition to its weekly meetings. These included trips to the Lake District, North Wales, Western Ireland and Slovenia. The Group found youth hostelling fun and low cost and recommended it to other adventurous Groups.

Over the years the SU3A Travel Group set an example to other Groups wishing to try out ventures in their own particular ways. The Travel Committee has provided expert advice to other Group Coordinators, recognising that travel is an excellent way to make new friends, broaden horizons and to show that, in retirement, there is still much more out there to learn.

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# Chapter 5

## Academia

**D**uring the past decade SU3A increased its contact with the academic world by -

- inviting expert speakers from the two local universities to our meetings
- our members helping with university research projects in various ways.

As early as 2005, Roy Darlison encouraged other members to attend seminars on prostate cancer, held at Abbeydale Sports Club. The speakers were from a specialist team based in Sheffield.

### *Guest Lectures*

Since then contact with both universities has steadily increased. Our Gift Aid fund was used to promote two lectures, one from each university. The first, presented by speakers from The University of Sheffield School of Health and Related Research, discussed research in the provision of Emergency Services and the future of Accident and Emergency Departments in Sheffield hospitals. The second, in December 2008, was provided by Sheffield Hallam University at their city centre campus. Professor Mike Smith gave an entertaining account of his pioneering work on medical imaging.

Following concerns about climate change, the SU3A Sustainable Development Group offered to mount three lectures in the Spring of 2009. The first speaker was Peter Smith, Professor of Sustainable Energy at the University of Nottingham. The second speaker was Dr. Ralph Hebden, a specialist in global warming and environmental studies, who was also a SU3A member. At a later meeting Dr. Nigel Dunnett of the University of Sheffield provided an illustrated lecture on 'green' architecture, showing how wild plant life could be incorporated into city planning.

A few weeks later the Group organised a 'Gardeners' Question Time', which proved to be a very popular event and emphasised the value of organic gardening. These events were held at the city centre Quaker Meeting House and were funded from Gift Aid income.

City centre events continued to prove popular, with members coming from a wide area of Sheffield. At the beginning of 2010 the Executive Committee decided to experiment further, with a variety of lectures at the Showroom Cinema. This venue was close to the rail and bus stations and easily accessible to our widening membership. Each event was arranged on a Friday morning.

### *Lectures*

Attendances varied, but outstandingly popular was a talk by Mike Bennett on engineering projects world-wide. Mike was founder member of our Science and Technology Group. In the summer a speaker from the University of Sheffield presented a talk on post Stalinist Russia. She was Dr. Miriam Dobson, a specialist in Russian history and contemporary Russian life. Shortly afterwards Miriam invited some SU3A members to contribute to an international website edited by one of her contacts in Moscow. During the next few months SU3A members provided poetry, autobiographies, short stories and local travel writings for the Russian website.

During the Autumn of 2010 a talk on the 'Rivers of Sheffield' was attended by over 70 SU3A members and their friends. In 2011 the popularity of the Friday lectures grew amazingly. A lecture on Linguistics, by Professor Andrew Linn, resulted in a full house with several members unable to get in. Professor Linn then offered to provide his talk on a further occasion.

The second form of contact with the academic world was through members helping with university research projects.

### *Research Projects*

Contact with product designers at Sheffield Hallam University went back over a decade to when the SU3A Modern Design Group helped undergraduates with products designed for older members of the population.

Between 2001 and 2008 SU3A members worked with post graduate students in various ways. There were new designs for garden equipment, connectors in hospital theatres, studies in the emotional aspects of home life, work on devices to measure blood pressure and, most importantly, how the home needed to change as people became limited by ageing.

*Future  
Bathroom  
Project*

The Future Bathroom Project lasted from 2008 to 2011. Over 20 SU3A members worked with staff from Sheffield Hallam's Art and Design Research Centre and Centre for Health and Social Care, discussing emotional as well as functional aspects of domestic design. The first prototypes of new bathroom equipment were displayed in September 2010; and in March 2011 the project was officially completed. Apart from highly innovative bathroom products becoming available, the research methodology involving user groups was considered important by the Hallam staff and the project external advisory panel. It was here that SU3A members had played an important role.

In 2007 the University of Sheffield's Department of Psychology invited SU3A members to assist in a study of the human brain. The Department was interested to find whether fish oil supplements aided mental processes amongst the elderly. Approximately 30 members agreed to help and underwent a series of computer tests of their memory, manipulative and perceptual skills. Unfortunately the results of this study were inconclusive.

Both universities in Sheffield have shown increasing interest in SU3A; and clearly many SU3A members enjoy helping with research. In recent years SU3A has responded to some six requests for help each year. Amongst these was one from the Department of Geography at the University of Sheffield. Rosie Emeny, a PhD student, investigated how the car was used to access and experience the countryside. Her researches will be submitted in September 2012 and should make interesting reading.

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## Chapter 6

### Local Pursuits

Sheffield, City on the Move, has one of the largest U3As in the United Kingdom. Since its inception in 1986, membership has steadily increased and the number of Groups has multiplied accordingly. This is due to the dedication of many volunteers, not least of all the General Coordinators, who have taken day to day responsibility for Group development and wellbeing.



**Fig 8: Past and present General Coordinators pictured at the Civic Reception held to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sheffield U3A**

*Above left to right: Doreen Bezant, Brian Bezant, Elizabeth Vallance, Peter Digby, Barbara Steel, Bob Smith, Margaret Bullivant, Jim Walker*

Yet many people in the city remain unaware of U3A and periodic attempts at publicity and local development remained essential.

*Publicity*

Frank and Ruth Abel handled publicity for many years. In the spring of 2005 Peter Barclay was approached by Helen Cowen, Chair of the Executive Committee, to further extend SU3A Publicity. His first step was to establish an Editorial and Publicity Sub-Committee to harmonise a house style for *Links*, the website and other publicity ventures.

For some years SU3A had enjoyed the cooperation of the City Library Service. A revised publicity leaflet was introduced and these became available in all Sheffield's 28 branch libraries. Following the success of the leaflet, the Central Library agreed to a large exhibition being held during November 2007. It was mounted on the first floor and seen by many members of the public. New mobile display boards were purchased and an attractive photographic design was added, showing a range of SU3A activities. These were circulated the following year to most branch libraries south Sheffield.

The leaflet and SU3A logo were in need of further revision and the Executive Committee agreed to employ a local graphic designer, Paul Pugh, to help. Peter Digby, Stella Longden and Rati Chiba agreed to appear in the cover picture. At the same time, Paul arranged for a new vertical banner to be purchased with a design matching the leaflet. These proved a great success.

*Pre-retirement Courses*

In 2008 SU3A was invited by a company called PREP to make short presentations at their pre-retirement courses. These were well received; and a team of members was involved in giving a talk every fortnight at a variety of venues across the city. The new leaflets had proved invaluable.

In 2007, the Executive Committee reconsidered the needs of members living to the north of the city. North Sheffield U3A had been established in 1999 in order to encourage participation in that area. They held monthly meetings at Firth Park Library, but had not been able to achieve a viable membership. In 2007 its members decided to disband. This meant that, apart from Indoor Bowling, there was now no activity at all north of the

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city centre - members were obliged to travel to the southern suburbs to participate in Groups.

At the AGM in 2007, Shelagh Woolliscroft joined the Committee and proposed that some outreach work be undertaken. In September of that year two public meetings were held in library community rooms, one in Chapeltown and the other in Parson Cross. These resulted in seven new Groups and, although two folded within the year, five remain and have attracted members from other parts of the city.

*Outreach  
Project*

In 2008 further open meetings were arranged in Firth Park and Stocksbridge libraries. There was little interest at Firth Park, but people in the Stocksbridge area took to U3A like ducks to water and very soon another five Groups were up and running. The Coordinators of these Groups subsequently organised further publicity and 15 Groups were successfully operating in the north of the city by 2011, with more in the pipeline.

In 2009 Shelagh became the new Chairman of SU3A and in 2010 Pat Battams and Peter Hughes, who had both assisted with the outreach work, joined the Executive Committee. Pat took over from Peter Barclay as Publicity Coordinator and Peter Hughes continued to offer support to the fledgling Groups in the north. There was little doubt that further outreach work would generate yet more Groups in other areas of Sheffield where members were under-represented.

Towards the end of 2008 SU3A was contacted by a parent with children at Tapton School. SU3A were invited to take part in a community arts project involving GCSE students studying drama. An intense morning followed in which members recounted personal experiences as wartime children. To their surprise, a month later the students produced an impressive dramatisation of World War II memories. These included the traumas of air raids, home sickness and German occupation. It was hoped that other Sheffield schools would take up the idea, but lack of funding prevented this happening.

*Helping in  
Schools*

*World War II Project* However, members of SU3A were undaunted and launched a further World War II project in 2009. Over 20 members who remembered the war from their childhood or experiences in the armed services responded. Thanks to the many hours spent by volunteers who interviewed and then transcribed their notes, a sizable file of reminiscences appeared ready for publication. Some veterans were later invited into local schools to speak to students.

*Reading in Schools* A further scheme, started in 2009, proved popular in Sheffield schools. This was the 'Reading in Schools' initiative headed by Yvonne Rowland. Many children were leaving primary school with weaknesses in reading ability, impeding their transition to secondary education. In that year over 25 SU3A members agreed to help. They served for periods of 10 weeks, providing one hour's personal mentoring per child each week. By spring 2011 over 30 SU3A members were involved in the scheme, which included improving skills in articulation and conversation.

These were all examples of intergenerational activities in which older members of the population lent a helping hand to the young.

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# Chapter 7

## The Jubilee Year

**J**anuary 2011 marked the beginning of the Silver Jubilee Year. Members who had served SU3A especially well over the years were invited to a Civic Reception at Sheffield Town Hall.

*Civic  
Reception*

'Where have you been?

Which Groups are you in now?

Remember the old times when ... .'

After lunch there were pleasantly short speeches and the Lord Mayor, Councillor Alan Law, was awarded Honorary Membership of SU3A. He invited members to tour the building. However, most people preferred to chat; mellowed by memories of old times, places long since visited and friends long since passed away. Time to go - there were fond farewells and heartfelt promises to stay in touch.

During the course of the next few months, as gardens and parkland recovered from a bitter winter, a determined group of SU3A volunteers began to clear a wilderness of weeds and replace it with fresh plants. At Whirlow Brook Park a new garden was created in memory of members who had formed a vital part of SU3A in past years and should never be forgotten.

In May a long slim boat sat in the sun. Passengers were checked on board and by mid-afternoon they were away, gliding from Sheffield canal basin for a trip along the waterway. There was a relaxed festive atmosphere, with a bar at one end, and cream teas at Tinsley Locks. Some passengers climbed



**Fig 9: The Commemorative Garden**

on deck, clicking away with their digital cameras at historic buildings, wayside trees and occasional swans.

*Jubilee Day* The major event of the year was the Jubilee Day at Wortley Hall in June. After two years of detailed planning, all the Committee members could do was pray for fine weather. The sun shone brilliantly; bright yellow and blue balloons decked Wortley Hall. There was so much to see in too short a space of time - with a vast assortment of attractive Group displays and laptops everywhere.

Outside on the lawns draughts, chess, bowls and croquet proved highly popular; whilst over at Wortley Church 80 people excitedly awaited a talk on local history, followed by a short ramble back to the Hall.



**Fig 10: Croquet on the lawns of Wortley Hall** (Mike Ford)

Somehow, the caterers managed to provide lunch for over 600 hungry members before 2.00pm and the official opening by Ian McMillan, local poet and broadcaster. As usual, his stories about South Yorkshire folk prompted considerable laughter. On a gentler note Ian stepped down to meet veterans of the Second World War and present them with a commemorative copy of 'Lest we Forget', a SU3A publication launched that morning. Afterwards there was singing and Sanskrit chanting, but as one lady remarked:

'I wanted to join in the chanting,  
but how could I with a mouthful  
of scone and cream?'



**Fig 11: Ian McMillan** (Peter Barclay)

Long shadows appeared across the lawns; in nostalgic mood the Singing for Pleasure Group continued to entertain a large roomful of members. Many joined in with

'Remember how we laughed away the hours,  
Those were the days, Oh yes those were the days.'

It had been a day to remember. Cars drove away; coaches slowly filled and returned back to the city centre and beyond.

'When will the next one be?' someone asked.  
'The Golden Jubilee twenty five years on.' came the reply. The fact was they had all enjoyed themselves so much, thanks to the very hard work of the trusty Jubilee organisers.

There were more events in July, with a Saturday evening ceilidh at Millhouses. Music was provided by the Fine Fettle band, which lived up to its name in every respect. Maggie proved to be an excellent caller, who had no problems in getting everyone on their feet throughout the evening. 'Do-si-do your corner and promenade the hall' she sang out, bringing back happy

*Ceilidh*

memories for those who had enjoyed Saturday hops in former years. At the interval there were refreshments for all; after which Joe, our highland piper, gave the band a well deserved break whilst he led the Gay Gordons. A fine mix of members from a variety of SU3A Groups, a social levelling and no chance to sit out feeling unwanted. A strong sense of well being prevailed throughout the evening, which many members would have liked to be repeated on a future occasion.

The beautiful summer weather continued throughout July, but plants were beginning to suffer for want of water. At the Commemorative Garden during August the first autumn tints had appeared. By then the moorlands were covered in heather, whilst willow herb prevailed on many pathways and country lanes.

### *Chatsworth Picnic*

The unsettled weather in August played tricks on the organisers of the Chatsworth picnic, when rain discouraged support from many members. However, late in the afternoon sunshine reappeared and by the River Derwent a light hearted game of cricket was enjoyed. Additional entertainment came from doughty members retrieving the ball from the river.

### *Jubilee Lecture*

There were more events later in the year - a repeat of the canal boat trip; the Jubilee Lecture from local writer Gervase Phinn; and in December afternoon tea at the magnificent Cutlers' Hall - almost where the Jubilee Year had begun with the Civic Reception in January.

A wonderful year; a year to remember - with a feel-good factor throughout!

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# Chapter 8

## Epilogue

**A**s Jubilee Year 2011 draws to a close we can be forgiven for speculating on how the U3A movement as a whole, and SU3A in particular, may develop in years to come.

With such an active and committed membership SU3A must surely have a bright future, provided Group leaders and Committee members continue to volunteer in sufficient numbers. We need them to keep the show on the road!

*Volunteers  
always  
needed*

But there are several unknowns –

- Will we retain our numbers, or will the new later retirement age have an effect on membership?
- How will our partnerships with the universities and with the City Council develop?
- Will we find affordable premises in the city centre so that we can continue to attract members from across the city?
- How will SU3A fit within the concept of the Big Society?

All will be revealed in due course.

For now we are content to enjoy the fulfilment, the friendship and the fun that are the hallmarks of our unique organisation.

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**Thanks are due to all those  
members of Sheffield U3A  
who helped in so many ways.**

In particular, to the various  
contributors of photographs, which  
helped to enhance the pages of this  
publication and also the attractive  
colour cover.

Apologies are extended to those  
who provided photographs which  
were not used due to lack of space.

# SU3A Officers : 2001 - 2011

<b>Year</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>General Coordinator(s)</b>
<b>2001</b>	Helen Cowen	Derek Cave	Margaret Bullivant
<b>2002</b>	Helen Cowen	John Roddis	Margaret Bullivant
<b>2003</b>	Rachel Frith	Derek Cave	Peter Digby
<b>2004</b>	Barbara Steel	Derek Cave	Peter Digby
<b>2005</b>	Barbara Steel	Derek Cave	Peter Digby
<b>2006</b>	Barbara Steel	Derek Cave	Peter Digby
<b>2007</b>	Barbara Steel	Jim Rowland	Brian & Doreen Bezant
<b>2008</b>	Vera Dyer	Jim Rowland	Brian & Doreen Bezant
<b>2009</b>	Vera Dyer	Jim Rowland	Brian & Doreen Bezant
<b>2010</b>	Vera Dyer	Jim Rowland	Brian & Doreen Bezant
<b>2011</b>	Vera Dyer	Chris Cave	Jim Walker

