

YAHF U3A Summer School 2025

This Summer School has gone from strength to strength since it was started up by the U3A groups in South Yorkshire at a location near Barnsley. They now hold the school at larger premises, the 'UK Home Office Resilience Academy' at Hawkhill, near Easingwold which, being just to the north of York on the A19, is quite accessible from other parts of Yorks. & Humber and the North-East. The accommodation is also suitable for participants with mobility issues, although the short distance from the town of Easingwold itself, and the length of the entrance drive, does mean that those without their own transport need to arrive by taxi. There were 120 people in attendance at the 2025 School.

The Summer School is an excellent occasion to socialise with people from other U3A groups – there was a large established contingent from South Yorkshire (Sheffield/Barnsley) and from York City itself, but also members came from other parts of the country such as the South-West and Kent. Many of the participants are regular attendees, year on year. The School offers two full days of tuition with ten different subjects on offer, ranging from cosmology (which was very popular) to Japanese and Spanish studies through to ancient history and the story of democracy/ authoritarianism and even improvised drama. For those with the energy there are also optional evening events one can attend – a folkdance, a quiz and a lecture. On the final morning there is a 'show and tell' when the individual groups share their learning experience in a plenary session – so a little like being back at work (getting to grips with *Powerpoint*), but in fact most of the participants make light of the occasion and offer a fun-filled 'skit' to illustrate their experiences of their chosen subject.

The teaching itself takes place in the annexe of large Queen Anne-period house at Hawkhill, and there is a comfortable and modern accommodation block with en-suite rooms and even a games room; there are some grounds immediately outside the coffee lounge with attractive flower-beds, and over lunch or in the evening one can stroll further afield in the quite extensive woodland plantations on the estate. The Georgian town of Easingwold itself however would be about a mile away across fieldside paths, but there is also a welcoming bar area in Hawkhill House which is open for socialising at the end of the day. One can attend the school as a day delegate but most people stay over, so they can be part of the social atmosphere, and the food is second to none (Yorkshire portions) with a range of meat, fish and veggie options.

Jill decided to study the 60's – see below

Gavin Roberts

The course was called My Generation – study of Art, Culture and Literature in the 1960s. We were looking at a time of change from the beginning to the end of the decade. There were a lot more opportunities for people as the decade went on and people had more freedom to do as they pleased. More opportunities were given to women for example when the contraceptive pill was introduced initially to married women only, and the Abortion Act which followed. The women at Dagenham Fords went on strike for equal pay in 1968 and in 1970 the Equal Pay Act was introduced.

We were looking forward to the 70s rather than back to the years just after the war. We looked at Labour and the scientific revolution which is referenced as the "white heat of technology" speech by Harold Wilson. He seems to be referring to another world when he says :

“For the commanding heights of British industry to be controlled today by men whose only claim is their aristocratic connections or the power of inherited wealth or speculative finance is as irrelevant to the 20th century as would be the continued purchase of Commissions in the armed forces by lordly amateurs”. I love this quote – it really paints a picture!

He stresses the need to move forward. It was an exciting time to live through as anything seemed possible.

There were great changes in music during the decade from Chubby Checker doing the Twist - which would have been amazing at the time - onto the Beatles and Bob Dylan going electric.

Fashion was important at this time. Audrey Hepburn sported the little black dress in Breakfast at Tiffanys, Diana Rigg wore a leather cat suit in the Avengers, Mary Quant designed Hotpants. At the other end of the scale tie and dye and the hippy look came in culminating in Glam Rock arriving in 1970. BIBA opened and I remember a school trip from Sheffield supposedly to the Natural History Museum, when we spent all our time in BIBA! I don't know how we got away with it! I remember it being very dark, and therefore very exciting!

We studied Billy Liar by Keith Waterhouse (not my cup of tea) then went on to The L shaped room by Lynn Reid Banks which was much more interesting. The poets we studied were Philip Larkin and Seamus Heaney, both active in the 60s, and the artists studied were Graham Sutherland and David Hockney. The tutor we had made it fun and we all contributed to the sessions.

At the end for our show and tell we prepared a list of all legislation passed during this time and a very funny skit on the L shaped room. It was an excellent course and the only advice I would give would be to take a cushion as there is a lot of sitting down – and try not to eat too much - the food was excellent.

Jill Darrington