



Introduction from Iain Cassidy

Dear Friends,

I visited Newton Abbot u3a last month for an enjoyable lunch where I got to know members, and I'll be meeting many more of you at our celebration of u3a at *u3a Festival 26*.

I always leave these events inspired by the vibrancy of members, and how u3a can be life-changing for so many of you.

The final story of this newsletter is a feature on member Roberta. We met when I visited North Down & Ards u3a a few months ago and I was immediately taken by her passion for the u3a movement.

Now that summer is fully underway, many of you will be going on holiday or thinking of the places that you'd like to visit. Our new partnership, u3a Getaways, combines the love of exploring new places with the companionship and learning that u3a is known for. See the exciting programme of trips further down this newsletter.

With very best wishes

Iain Cassidy

CEO of the Third Age Trust

u3a Festival 26

We're looking forward to welcoming so many of you from 1-3 July at *u3a Festival 26*. For those of you who can't join us in York, *u3a Festival Fringe* is a great opportunity to take part in the fun of the Festival, wherever you are.

One of the highlights of the programme is our talk, *The History of Shoes*, taking place online on Wednesday 8 July at 2pm. Member Robin will share insights from his career as a shoe designer and take members on a historical journey of shoe styles up to the present day. This is a repeat of the talk he's delivering in person in York.

Other upcoming *u3a Festival Fringe* events include *Fusion Tai Qi Gong*, *Mrs Charles Dickens tells her story*, and *The role of wind energy in the UK's electricity system*.



friends learning

Explore the UK with u3a Getaways

We're taking learning on tour with our exclusive holiday programme for u3a members, *u3a Getaways*. Open to members and their friends, our themed trips venture across the UK and cover wine tasting, zoology and aviation.

The first trip, taking off on 14 September in Torquay, explores the life of one of Britain's most iconic authors, Agatha Christie. Coinciding with the *Agatha Christie Festival*, members can follow in Christie's steps and see the locations that inspired some of her greatest works, while learning more about her life. [See the full programme of holidays.](#)



Volunteering opportunities with the Trust

A vacancy has opened up on the Third Age Trust Board. This is an exciting opportunity to make a real difference within the u3a movement and drive strategic change. We are looking for members with experience in the following areas:

- in a non-executive role at a large organisation or charity
- organisational strategy development
- change management
- equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Nominations for this role will open on Thursday 2 July. You can read more about the role, and book onto an upcoming briefing session, on [the elections page](#).

In addition to the Board role, we are currently looking for Non-Executive Directors for our trading company and Digital Service Advisory Group members. Read more about the roles on [our website](#).

As we enter the summer holiday period, it seems certain that there will be no let up in the workload of the Trust.

At the last meeting in March the Trust Board approved both the Trust and trading company budgets. The Trust budget for 2026/27 includes significant spend on promoting the movement and supporting u3as, partly through the potential development of a future digital platform. The next Board meeting is at the end of June, which will feature both topics.

We are also coming up to the second anniversary of the *Fit For The Future* vote, which led to a change to our governance structure. We will review our experiences of the new governance approach and look at how the new Board, Council and staff interact within the Trust.

During the summer we will be looking at how u3as have been navigating the last five years since the pandemic. Whilst membership numbers are rising back towards pre-pandemic levels, a number of u3as have closed for a wide variety of reasons, and the Trust needs to consider if, where and when future additional support can be provided.

I'll be off to the Festival at the *University of York* in a few weeks' time and all indications are that this festival will exceed the last one with over 1,000 u3a members registered to attend and over 100 activities over three days. I hope to see you there and let's hope the weather is at least as good as last time!

Tell us about a world-changing journey in our essay competition

Our essay competition is back and we want you to tell us about an incredible real and non-autobiographical journey. It could be a historical voyage or expedition, a scientific or medical breakthrough or a spiritual journey.

Submit your essay by Friday 31 July at 12 noon for the chance to win books, donated by *HX Expeditions*. [Read the full guidelines on our Essay Competition page.](#)



A retirement transformed by u3a

Roberta has been a member of North Down & Ards u3a for almost thirty years. She talks about how it changed her life.



I was at North Down & Ards u3a's very first meeting in 1997. The year my mother died and then my daughters went to university, I went from having four people in the house to being on my own. I thought, 'I have to go out and do something.' I was working at the time so when I gave up work, there was a big empty space ahead of me. u3a filled that.

I was interested in craft. We went along to a crafts exhibition and from that we started a craft group, related to patchwork and embroidery. Then there was the walking group. We developed into different walking groups – slow walkers, people who use walking sticks, mountain walkers. I was always interested in modern sequence dancing so I decided to set up a class of dancing. It's exercise to music – keeping brains active and feet active. We very soon started a gardening group where we went around people's houses and saw their gardens and then we started going to national gardens and parks.

It was all about going out and meeting people. u3a brought socialising and going out for coffee. I was always busy. It's what all u3a members say – you don't know how you had time to work!

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Headline photos: The summer edition of u3a matters is out now; South Durham u3a Craft Group; Broxbourne u3a with the Lord Lieutenant as part of their nomination process for a King's Trust Award for Volunteers in Hertfordshire.
