

u3a friends

April 2024

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Introduction from Sam Mauger

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the April edition of the Friends newsletter.

For those of you who receive our members' magazine u3a matters, I hope you enjoy the new relaunched version of the magazine, designed to put a spring in your step.

To encourage more people to benefit from being part of u3a, we are launching a new u3a matters pass it on campaign. Please pass the magazine on to someone who may be interested in finding out more about u3a and becoming part of this great movement.

This month has International Creativity and Innovation Day – which epitomises all the u3a Friends who contribute to this great newsletter.

The u3a Festival in July will have many u3a creative people taking part. It will be the biggest meeting of u3a members since we began over 40 years ago. The programme is now on the u3a website, and we will be releasing tickets on **Tuesday at 10am**.

On Tuesday, if you have access to the internet, please book on the u3a website – the booking link is on the festival page, under events. If you would like tickets but do not have access to the internet, you can ring u3a office at that time. The phone number is on the last page of this newsletter.

I hope you enjoy the month ahead and I look forward to hearing about what you have been doing.

With best wishes to all of you.

Sam Mauger

CEO of the Third Age Trust

Exploring what food means to different people

Earlier this year, Crouch End & District u3a started a *Real Food* group. Explaining the concept of the group, group co-leader Sally says "we are interested in great cooking, possibly from scratch, with great ingredients AND accepting that food means different things to different people but is also real. We lead busy lives – so some people may cook with frozen vegetables or ready meals – and that is okay."



The group recently made sauerkraut in a session focussed on fermentation.

Southport u3a spread their roots at the Southport Flower Show

For the third year in a row, Southport u3a will have a presence at *Southport Flower Show*. Their team are working on a show garden which will explore the last 100 years of garden design to mark the centenary of the Flower Show. The path leads through five differing linked gardens across the 100 years: Victorian, Post War utilitarian garden, 1960s rockery, 1980s Japanese-themed garden and a present day modern structured garden. You can see an artist impression of the Japanese section of their design, created by Gail Whitfield and Bev Bush, above.



In previous years, u3as from across the UK have attended the flower show to support Southport u3a – and if you would like to attend the show, there is a special discount available. *Southport Flower Show* are offering all u3a Members £10 off gate tickets if they buy before 31 July. Just use the promo code 'u3a' when purchasing any day ticket online. For tickets and more information, go to www.southportflowershow.co.uk.



April u3a matters – out now

Our members' magazine landed on doorsteps earlier this month – with a new name, a new look, and content specially designed to reflect what members want to see in the magazine.

Subscriptions to *u3a matters* are organised by local u3as – if you don't currently receive the magazine, please talk to your local u3a committee.

... from the Chair, Liz Thackray

I have just returned from meeting u3a members in North East England. It was great to meet so many people and to take part in a number of group activities.

During this trip, as with others I have made, I was very aware of the need to use every opportunity to make the most of publicity. Some u3as used my visit as a hook on which to organise press coverage to get the word out about the u3a. Others used social media. At present we are advertising nationally on *Boom Radio*. If we are serious about increasing our membership, we need to use every opportunity to spread the word about u3a.

Alongside the good news, I am concerned that many u3a members do not appear to understand we all have a part to play in keeping our u3as alive. I arrived home to find an email from a u3a that is closing as nobody is willing to step up and fill committee vacancies. I met u3a members who told me of groups with waiting lists, but nobody willing to set up a new group or split the current group into two and create vacancies.

If we are to grow, we need to be ready to welcome new members and enable them to join our groups and activities.

Introducing the new Trustee for Wales

The Third Age Trust recently welcomed two new Trustees to the Board; Colin Luker as the new Trustee for Wales and David Blanchflower as the new Trustee for the North West.

Colin has been a u3a member for 25 years, and is currently a member of Newcastle Emlyn u3a where he runs a Science and Technology group. Colin is looking forward to "[being] able to apply my experience which I have gained from my involvement as a Trustee with other organisations. In addition, I have a lifetime of knowledge gained in a variety of industries."

We will be talking to the Trustee for the North West, David Blanchflower, in the next newsletter.



friends stories

Causeway u3a runs a monthly Table Quiz with a difference. We meet in a venue, but we have continued to host, via Zoom, some housebound members and our friends from across the sea in Ayr. We have also tried to make the event suitable for members with hearing difficulties by providing printouts of the questions and answers.

It's a very sociable way to enjoy a wet Monday afternoon, as we usually get on the North coast, and get some exercise for the brain.

Venie, Causeway u3a

A musical journey, sparked by an email



Ken from West Cheshire Rural u3a talks about how skill sharing has resulted in a flurry of ukulele learning in the North West.

I discovered the ukulele with the u3a and it changed my life.

Five years ago, my granddaughter was learning ukulele at school and I thought it might be something I could try. I have always been musical but have never mastered playing anything I tried except singing. My wife bought me a cheap ukulele for Christmas and I was really pleased, until I tried and failed to tune it. I was getting nowhere and gave up.

Several months later, our u3a received a letter from Dave, the Ukulele leader from Wallasey u3a on the Wirral. He was offering help to anyone who wanted to get started but didn't know how. That was what I needed and I took up the offer.

I went up to see Dave and after tuning me up, he gave me some basic instructions, a couple of easy starter songs and a plan to go forward. I was hooked.

I went back to our u3a and our group was born. None of us could play, so as leader I just made sure I was two weeks ahead of the group. We progressed slowly but surely.

When a burst of beginners wanted to join, we hosted a beginners introduction day for u3as in our NorthWest network. This resulted in a new group in Tarporley u3a. In November 2023 we had a repeat situation, which resulted in two new groups in Northwich and Macclesfield.

So that initial invite has resulted in four new groups and 50+ people learning a new skill. All under the banner of u3a.



Headline photos: Chandler Ford u3a's Crafties group with blankets they knitted for a local Dementia Support service; Lancaster & Morecambe u3a rowers are planning a relay of the River Lune to celebrate the 35th anniversary of their u3a; Chair Liz Thackray with Blyth u3a's German group.

u3a

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