



## Introduction from Iain Cassidy

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Dear Friends,

This month, I visited the North East's day of learning and discovery at Ushaw House. As with every u3a event I attend, there was so much creativity and curiosity on show. You can read more about that below, along with other stories that demonstrate the vibrancy within our movement.

We'll be celebrating Volunteers' Week at the beginning of next month, which is a good time to reflect on the huge contribution that goes on behind the scenes of every u3a. This newsletter finishes with a profile of Mike, a committee member of Todmorden u3a and a learning volunteer at the Trust.

If you have a moment this month, take the time to notice the work done by committee members, event organisers and group leaders across your u3a – and perhaps think about whether you might enjoy getting involved too.

With very best wishes

Iain Cassidy

CEO of the Third Age Trust

## Explore walks with another u3a this summer

This national walking month, why not explore a route you may not have tried before, with the help of the u3a Walking Exchange. This initiative links walking groups from different u3as, giving members the chance to enjoy walks hosted by a different u3a while discovering unfamiliar areas. Read more on the [u3a walking exchange website](#).



Pictured: Ludlow u3a walking group, pictured by Stuart Knight

## Ambassador Cruise Line sponsors u3a Festival 26

Anticipation for u3a Festival 26 is building as we're now less than two months away. We're delighted to announce that Ambassador Cruise Line will be the main sponsor of the event. Britain's authentic no-fly cruise line, Ambassador offers the opportunity to explore breathtaking destinations. Find out more on [Ambassador's website](#).

## u3a Festival Fringe – book now

We're delighted to share that you can now book your spot at u3a Festival Fringe. This specially curated programme of online events intentionally complements the activities at the in-person Festival so that, wherever you are, you can be part of the fun. [Book your spot](#).

The Vikings and Wessex – From Last to First Kingdom – Thursday 25 June, 2pm

The role of wind energy in the UK's electricity system – Tuesday 30 June, 11am

The technology built into modern cars and trucks (live from u3a Festival) – Wednesday 1 July, 11.30am

Mrs Charles Dickens tells her story – Thursday 2 July, 2pm

Watercolours with Tony – Monday 6 July, 10am

The history of shoes – Wednesday 8 July, 2pm

Fusion Tai Chi Gong – Thursday 9 July, 10am

Vengeance or vision: the works of Artemisia Gentileschi – Thursday 9 July, 2pm

The role of women in ancient Egypt – Friday 10 July, 2pm

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Last month, I was delighted to welcome new Council Representatives to the Council and to thank those who had come to the end of their term of office. The Council now has an almost complete membership of 23 Council Representatives, including the Chair of Network link.

Looking back at the first year of the Council, it was a transition period during which it began to establish itself. The Council identified several areas of concern for u3as, which have now been incorporated in the Trust strategic plan for 2026/27. These included recruitment and retention of committee members and new members, communication between membership and u3a office, external awareness of the u3a movement and the u3a website.

This year, the Council will continue to review the original work streams. We will also seek to identify practical solutions to problems faced by u3as based on experience and gather evidence of best practice. This will be widely shared in the regions and nations.

Council Representatives regularly attend regional support team meetings where they learn about what is happening within the region, and share news from the Trust. Council Representatives work collaboratively with both the Board and u3a office staff to put the membership at the centre of all the Third Age Trust does. To fulfil their brief, we need to hear from the membership about issues that concern them – so please do get in touch with your Council Representative and consider inviting them to visit.

### How to be more mindful this May

Inspired by the talent and great ideas of u3a members, each Friday this month we have suggested a fun activity you could try. Here's one, from Mindfulness and Meditation Subject Adviser Mike, who leads mindful guided walks at Sheffield u3a.

- Take a moment before the walk starts to close your eyes and take in the things you can hear, smell and touch. Then, throughout the walk, walk in silence, noticing as much as you can. 💡
- Try and engage all the senses – you could touch the bark of a tree or the roughness of a wall. Is there anything to smell – like the roses? 🌸
- Stop and look: at the view, the sky, a tree, a flower or a bird. ☁️
- Look for examples of beauty. Focus in on something, such as a tree, a leaf or bracken, and try to spot patterns. 🌿



## The life of a u3a volunteer



The u3a movement runs on the contribution of volunteers. Todmorden u3a member Michael plays several roles at his u3a, and a few years ago, took on the challenge of becoming a national u3a learning volunteer.

At Todmorden u3a, I'm speaker secretary, deputy chair and I run our events. I'm also convenor of the local history and walking cricket groups. I do something with Todmorden u3a everyday. I had my own business and this is in a way is an extension of my work life. It keeps my brain active – keeps me thinking, planning and looking creatively for new ways of doing things.

I came to live in Todmorden 15 years ago, a complete stranger. I can count on one hand the number of people I knew where I lived before. I would run out of hands for the number of people I know in Todmorden. That's important for a stranger like me, who's come to a town and didn't know anybody.

Two years ago, I saw that the Third Age Trust were looking for volunteers to host online talks and put myself forward. In that role, I manage the event for the speakers and handle any issues and problems. I like to be behind the scenes and pulling the levers, and I feel I am contributing at a bigger level. It got me more involved in what we do nationally.

I would say quite simply, if you have the time to volunteer in a specific role at u3a, locally or nationally, do it. Once you get into these things, suddenly it opens up a whole different world of people, action and opportunities to use your skills.

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Headline photos: We're running an online introduction to bridge which can be booked on our online events page; High Wycombe u3a's woodcarving group photographed by Megan Taylor; members of u3as in the North West met together for a day of discovery and learning.

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