



Introduction from Iain Cassidy

Dear Friends,

You may have seen that The Sun newspaper last week featured Sudbury u3a member Melanie, a champion powerlifter now sharing her skills leading two u3a powerlifting groups. It's a fantastic story that showcases the brilliant things that can happen when members step forward to share their passions with others.

We know there are many more examples throughout the u3a movement of unique groups and the members leading them. In this newsletter alone, we have the story of a new open water swimming group and a local festival in Wales started by a u3a member and championing u3a bands.

I'd love to know from you, who are the u3a heroes and what are the unique groups within your u3a? Get in touch by emailing communications@u3a.org.uk.

And perhaps these stories will inspire you to try something new yourself. Next month, we'll be celebrating u3a week when we'll be challenging members to expand their horizons, in ways big or small. What will you try?

With very best wishes

Iain Cassidy

CEO of the Third Age Trust

Run the TCS London Marathon as part of Team u3a

Could you take on this iconic race? We have charity places for the TCS London Marathon on Sunday 25 April 2027. You could take in the sights of London while supporting the Third Age Trust. Applications close 18 September – apply now on [the fundraising page of our website](#) and let us know your connection to u3a and your fundraising plan.



friends events

Expand your horizons this September with u3a week

We are delighted to announce our programme of u3a week events, designed to present new perspectives.

- Monday 21 September – *Secrets of the human brain: Sleep and dreams*
- Tuesday 22 September – *The Enchanted Archipelago – a journey through the Galapagos with HX*
- Thursday 24 September – *Promoting brain health: from evidence to action*
- Friday 25 September – *Live cookery demonstration – try something new*

Alongside our online events, we will be using our social platforms to encourage members to try something new just for fun. Find out more on [the u3a week page](#).

friends offers

Take learning on tour

Make learning and laughter the centre of your next trip with u3a getaways. Each trip combines opportunities to learn about specific topics with meeting other u3a members. Join us from 12 October for *Appreciating Shakespeare* and explore the life and legacy of history's most famous playwright in the town he was born, Stratford-upon-Avon.



Looking forward, you can discover the festive treats of Yorkshire in November, learn about aviation heritage in March 2027, explore Dartmoor Zoo in April and experience expert-led wine tasting in May. Find out more on [the u3a getaways website](#).

Pictured: Shakespeare's birthplace, one of the sites members will visit in the Appreciating Shakespeare trip.

from Chair of the Board, Allan Walmsley

At its last meeting in June, the Board approved the Trust's new marketing strategy. This is based on member feedback and insights from the latest member survey, recent brand awareness research and audience and market analysis. The core issue that the strategy addresses is to improve awareness of the u3a brand and promote the benefits of membership.

In July, Trustees, Council Representatives and senior staff held an away day to look at ways of improving working effectiveness across the Trust..

The Board has also been preparing for the October AGM. Trustees recognise the need to clarify the Trust's Vision and Mission, and to explain the current marketing strategy.

Looking further into the future, the Board will be looking at various strategic challenges facing the movement. Whilst the overall membership numbers is increasing, the number of u3as is falling and many other find themselves in a fragile position.

Finally, elections open next week to elect one new Trustee to join the Third Age Trust Board. u3a committees have been given details on how to register to vote. Information on the candidates will be shared on [the elections page](#).

friends news from the members

Members of Holme Valley u3a take a dip

Holme Valley u3a have embraced the warm water by setting up a new group dedicated to open water swimming. Members take part at their own discretion, assessing whether cold water swimming is suitable for them. Their first dip was in June and there are already 17 members in the group, meeting every week in a local reservoir. Group leader Julio says, "We follow the swim with a coffee/hot chocolate/cake/biscuits and some nice conversation, all with a smile and the euphoria that cold water brings. It's hard not to smile after such an activity."



Monmouth u3a have a musical moment

A musical festival in Monmouth saw u3a bands play across four different pubs over eight hours on Saturday 25 July. This was the second year of the free pop-up festival, Monstock, which attracted audiences from across the Monmouth community.

The event was organised by Monmouth u3a Chair Averil and powered by u3a members, who created the festival website, photographed the event for publicity and produced video content.

Finding fulfilment with u3a



Becoming Groups Coordinator at York u3a has helped member Samantha make new friends and settle into a new area.

I had a life changing experience when my husband died and I became a widow. I decided to move to York to be closer to my children who had moved up north. Really, I was coming home because my mum was born in Whitby.

I'm a member of the Film Plus, Tai Chi, Gigs & Concerts groups. I'd always fancied trying tai chi and I adore it. Being in the moment allows me to focus on being truly mindful. My fellow u3a folk are a lovely group of people and I do everything in my power not to miss a week.

I looked at getting involved with volunteering at our u3a to make more friends and to give me something to do. The Chair quickly convinced me to consider becoming Groups Coordinator. It's a big role supporting 140 groups and 1,925 members but I love it. The main benefit is feeling useful and part of a team. Having administrative duties as part of the role keeps me active cognitively.

I'm a curious human, so I love listening to people's stories about their lives and how and why they joined u3a. Many group leaders are uncertain about how their activity will be received. Helping them manage their expectations and then seeing the Group flourish is so rewarding.

When you don't work, you lose an identity that was very much part of you. Being part of u3a, I feel completely fulfilled.

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Headline photos: Monmouth u3a band u3 performing at local music festival *Monstock*; Ilkley u3a Dale Striders on a trip to the Lake District; Southport u3a's show garden at the *Southport Flower Show*, inspired by funfairs.