

July 2023

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Introduction from Sam Mauger

Dear members,

It was great to have the opportunity to meet u3as in the West Midlands this month and to find out what they are all doing post Covid. Filled with great volunteers leading interest groups and committees, the importance of volunteering was high on everyone's agenda.

The u3a lives and breathes volunteering, and we all rely on people to come forward and take those places that help others do everything the u3a has to offer. Summer time is often a time when we take stock of what we might want to in the future.

At times it can feel a bit daunting to put your name forward to volunteer – but if you have any time to spare there are u3as who need you.

Looking further to the future – u3a Festival 24 is featured in this newsletter celebrating the u3a and the many interest groups in our midst.

The newsletter is packed with stories of what you are all doing over this summer. I hope it is great for all of you.

With very best wishes

Sam Mauger

CEO of the Third Age Trust

News from the Trust



Alfresco in Autumn

We are excited to announce our nationally coordinated event taking place in u3a week – Alfresco in Autumn on Friday 22 September. This event builds on the success of last year's Picnic in the Park where over 50 u3as came together in their local area.

Alfresco in Autumn could be playing football in a field, playing games in the garden or eating lunch on the lawn – anything that takes the learning and fun of your u3a outside.

u3a Festival 24

We are delighted to announce the first ever UK-wide u3a festival is taking 17–19 July 2024 at the University of York. The event will be an opportunity to bring members together to share the joy of u3a membership.

Trustee Margaret Fiddes is involved with organising the event and says, "The countdown to Festival 24 has begun and I am ridiculously excited. People are already coming up with ideas. We are planning to have a mixed and full programme together with activities, outings, music, speakers, sports and have-a-go sessions.

"What can you expect from the space at University of York? The possibilities are endless. We have meeting rooms, exhibition space, auditoria, outside and inside space and fantastic sports facilities. We just need to fill them with all the wonderful things that u3a is about."

More information on the festival will be shared in future newsletters.



Media News



u3a on the One Show

A host of stars joined Barnsley u3a member Mac McKechnie when he appeared on BBC's The One Show (Tuesday 18 July) to promote walking cricket. The episode featured a match between Barnsley u3a and Wakefield u3a's 'Wakefield Warriors' in front of broadcaster Angela Rippon and legendary umpire Dickie Bird OBE.

Elsewhere, Sidmouth u3a's mural of their town, created with local members of Girlguiding UK, featured in BBC's 'My Hometown' gallery on their website. You can read more on the mural and its creation in your June copy of Third Age Matters.



News from the Board

Liz Thackray, Chair of the Third Age Trust

While most of us are planning and taking holidays, I've been enjoying visiting u3as in South East and South West England.

I have met lots of u3a members in interest groups, coffee mornings, monthly meetings and network meetings.

What comes through loud and clear everywhere I go is the enthusiasm and energy of our members – whether they're playing table tennis or ukeles, writing short stories or talking about local history, chatting over coffee or over supper.

Highlights have included giving certificates to two u3as celebrating their silver jubilees, meeting possibly the youngest u3a member in the country – 27 year old treasurer of his u3a – meeting members of the two u3as whose invitations seeded these trips.

I am looking forward to visiting u3as in other parts of the UK later this year and next year.



1 Liz Thackray at a table tennis tournament hosted by Bearsted u3a

u3a News

Stone & District u3a photographer recognised by the RHS

Irene, a member of Stone & District u3a's Photography Group, was recently shortlisted in the RHS Photography and Botanical Art Competition and displayed at the Saatchi Gallery.



She and her husband Jim attended the preview of the exhibition, where Irene heard that she had been awarded an RHS Gold medal and the award for best portfolio. Congratulations Irene!



Country and Western celebration for Epsom & Ewell u3a

Epsom and Ewell u3a's Singing for Pleasure group have recently celebrated their tenth birthday.

The group started out with eight members and has now grown to almost fifty.

They celebrated by combining forces with the ukulele group for a Country and Western session. Great fun was had by all – and line dancing even broke out during their rendition of 'Achey, breaky heart.'

Spotlight On:

Tomy, Bicester u3a and u3a Interest Groups Online



It started five years ago when my wife found a leaflet about Bicester u3a. I love classical music and joined the Exploring Classical Music group.

I liked this group and the environment: For ninety minutes we listened to classical music and nothing disturbed us. The group operated in the best tradition of u3a: we were taking turns in presenting and hosting the biweekly sessions.

Then the pandemic struck and we could not meet in person. About that time I discovered u3a Interest Groups Online (then called Trust u3a). We decided to go "national": today we are again a vibrant group that continues to meet every fortnight and enjoys exploring classical music.

Recently, I have been helping with the Interest Groups Online website as a volunteer. That has to do with my professional background. By training, I am an experimental physicist. I always used computers to analyse my results. Today I can't do experiments but I can do software.

To maintain a website I had to master a completely new software. I am still learning. That's my personal benefit. I also see the benefit to the community: people are looking at the website and seeing that it's working. When I retired, I realised it is now time to give back to society something that others can benefit from. I think I am achieving this reasonably well.

Headline photos: Ards & Peninsula u3a's Allotment group who have been donating their produce to local foodbanks; Medway u3a member Danny (on the right) celebrated his 72nd birthday by climbing Snowdon with his friend Steve; Long Eaton & District u3a's belly dancing group.