

January 2023

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Introduction from Sam Mauger

Dear members,

This week I took part in the first strategy day for staff, Trustees and other members who lead our committees. **This was a chance for us all to share progress, ideas and learn from each other.** You can see some of the interesting stories which came from our Trustees throughout the year in the TAM magazine.

The u3a movement has certainly started 2023 as it means to go on with many examples of what makes u3a so special with your energy, creativity and skill sharing.

The photos sent in from members this month are inspiring. Please do keep sharing your stories and photos – you can call u3a office using the number on p4 of this newsletter.

One last request before I finish is for you all to please read our excerpt from u3a across Scotland poetry group's session, who kindly offered to be this month's Spotlight On at the end of the newsletter.

With very best wishes

Sam Mauger

CEO of the Third Age Trust

u3a News

A beautiful photo for every month of the year

Limebrook u3a's Photography Group have produced a calendar. Each month shows a different member's photo, with the theme of 'Essex Events' – including this wonderful photo by Brian Harris.

Graham has been leading the group for nine years and says, "Twelve different Photographers were represented and there was a very wide range of subjects.

The Group is very friendly and we enjoy our hobby without getting too serious regarding the equipment or technical side of photography., It is all about meeting and having fun with other members of Limebrook u3a."



VIPs join Bradford u3a for anniversary tea party

Bradford u3a was one of the first u3as to be formed, in 1984. They celebrated the movement's 40th Anniversary with an afternoon tea. It was attended by the Lord Mayor of Bradford along with representatives of the Yorkshire and the Humber Region, Pat Collard and Margaret Fiddes, and the Chair of the Third Age Trust, Liz Thackray.

Shining a lantern on u3a within the local community

Wells u3a took part in an annual lantern parade in their local community. Members came together and learnt how to make lanterns from willow and tissue paper in different shapes. The theme was the natural world and the environment and so the group created a dolphin. The parade was an opportunity to raise the profile of u3a and connect with other people in the community.



Your Stories



I was very excited when I learned that as part of u3a's 40th Anniversary the Walking Group would be walking around the famed Hitchin HOOP.

As a newcomer to Hitchin and knowing only my family, I had joined u3a a few months previously in the hope that it would enable me to enjoy new experiences and make new friends. Walking the HOOP delivered this in spades. I was immediately engaged in conversation with other members, some new like myself and others longer term and as we shared our lives, stories and laughter the miles melted away.

Pauline of Hitchin u3a was one of the many East of England u3a members who recorded their walks in September as part of the region's celebrations of u3a's 40th anniversary.

News from the Board

Liz Thackray, Chair of the Third Age Trust

Although we are now well into January, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everybody a happy new year.

As with the past three years, it looks as though 2023 is going to present us all with a number of challenges with continuing disruption to rail travel and other services, inflation, concerns about power supplies and climate change and continuing concerns about the wider world, including Ukraine.

What the past three years have taught us is that u3as are resilient and that members do all we can to support each other in our many and varied activities. Even when the odds seems stacked against us, we continue to learn, laugh and live.

This year will present new opportunities, including participation in the Hadrian's Wall event in May, and new challenges as we consider our plans and structures in order to be Fit for the Future.

No doubt there will be debate and some disagreement, but **hopefully we will emerge at the end of 2023 as a stronger movement with a clear sense of direction for the future, knowing we have overcome the challenges and are continuing to move forward together.** I guess if life were easy, it would be not be so interesting!

Media News

Penicuik u3a's Smartphone Surfers group featured in The Daily Express where the group spoke about how they shared their knowledge of phones and technology with each other.

Four members of **Lanark and District u3a** told their **romantic stories to The National newspaper**, and shared how u3a added to their relationships and lives. Between them, they are members of Scrabble, gardening, ukulele, poetry and circle dancing groups.

Another **Lanark and District member, Loraine, hit the headlines when she was awarded the British Empire Medal for voluntary services to the community** in The King's first Honours List. She managed to keep the secret for over a month – not even telling her family – until it was revealed by Buckingham Palace on New Year's Day.



When **Michael, of Wyre Forest u3a**, couldn't find anywhere to pickleball near him – he set up his own u3a interest group. It has become so popular that the players were interviewed by **BBC Radio Hereford and Worcester.**

Spotlight On:

u3a Across Scotland Poetry Group

A group of u3a members who all meet together on Zoom to discuss poetry. They allowed us to record their group and shared what they love about u3a – here is an excerpt from two members.



Jane: What do you get out of u3a online across Scotland and this poetry group in particular?

Olive: Well, I came to Edinburgh when my husband died and I wasn't in too great a state, mentally in a way, and I enjoyed Edinburgh so much, but I didn't know it well. My daughter's here. I didn't know anybody else.

I joined the u3a and it was the best thing I've ever done because, as we were saying earlier, the faces become friends. You know about these people and you care and you know who likes what poet and you know, you really get to know them perhaps even more than your friends. I like that.

Another thing I'll say before I stop is I like to increase my learning. I think it's good as I'm getting older. It was particularly good for me, especially when I was in hospital recently. It was great when I came out and could go to the Zoom and if it was a snowstorm, I had Zoom.


David: I've been away from Edinburgh for many years and I'm a private person and just like my mother found, when you get to the age of 88, your friends have gone. And so I have found a poetry group in u3a especially extremely helpful in showing me there are other people with whom I can communicate and with whom I can find pleasure.

And besides, I had an exaggerated view of my own skill as a poetry reader. And it gave me the opportunity to continue to delude myself I'm actually good at something besides the stuff I've taught for so many years.

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Headline photos: Pet psychologist Lucy Lofting with her dog Biggie, who feature in February's Third Age Matters; Isle of Skye's Step-it-up walking group; Bedale u3a's Have-A-Go Craft Group created an origami graffiti installation to promote their u3a.