

Welcome Pack


Chard Ilminster & District u3a

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Introduction



“u3a shows the value of communities of interest and learning which are not defined by age, or by past experience, but instead are defined by the experiences still to be explored”.



Thank you for joining us. Our u3a gives you opportunities to develop your interests, make new friends and have fun. During these uncertain times, demand to be part of the u3a movement is as high as ever, with people looking for new ways to keep connected with each other and keep up their cultural, educational and social activities.

Our amazing members have stepped up and found new and creative ways to keep connected with each other and continue their learning. You will see in this pack – there are many examples of new projects, ideas and shared skills and learning that our members are taking part in.

In this pack you will find what's available in our u3a including access to interest groups and communication platforms. You will also have access to the national Third Age Matters magazine, to the national online newsletter and various social media sites.

For more information about what we offer, visit our website (see first page).

Local u3a information

All about us

The u3a movement is a unique and exciting organisation which provides opportunities for retired and semi-retired people to come together to pursue a wide variety of interests.

The Chard, Ilminster and District branch was formed in 1995 and is one of nearly 1000 autonomous u3as throughout the UK.

We are a registered charity, number 1096163, and are part of the Avalon and South West Region u3a Networks. Membership numbers are circa 400 with approximately 50 interest groups. In addition, we have monthly general meetings with a guest speaker and where you can meet new people and catch up with the latest news.

Contacts

Our website contact page allows you to email our u3a officers who will be happy to deal with any queries. Useful information can also be gleaned via our Facebook page [@chardilminster.u3a](#)



**From Walking to
Talking, Gardening to
Cookery, Yachting to
Yoga, Current Affairs
to Supper Clubs – the
choice is endless and
determined by each
local u3a**



History

1981

beginning of movement

2010

membership reach
quarter million mark

Our founders envisaged a collaborative approach with peers learning from each other. The u3a movement was to be self-funded, with members not working towards qualifications but learning purely for pleasure. There would be no distinction between the learners and the teachers – everyone could take a turn at being both if they wished.

From its beginnings in 1981, the movement grew very quickly and by the early 1990s, a u3a was opening every fortnight. u3as grew in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and in 2008 membership was increasing by 11% every year. 2010 saw our membership hitting the quarter million mark.

At the end of 2016 the u3a movement reached the milestone of 1,000 u3as celebrated by a conference with speakers including Eric Midwinter – one of the founders of the u3a movement.

Today, our movement includes over 400,000 u3a members in more than 1,000 u3as and is continuing to grow every day.



Ethos and Principles

The Principles of the u3a Movement

The u3a movement is non-religious and non-political and has three main types of principle:

Lifelong Learning

- Membership of a u3a is open to all people who have retired from full time work
- Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.

Self Help

- Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire, by the members, for the members.
- No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all u3a members.

The Mutual Aid Principle

- Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the u3a movement.
- No payments are made to members for services rendered to any u3a.
- Each u3a is self-funded with membership.

Benefits of u3a membership

New Member Reactions

Below are some quotes from our members which demonstrate the value of u3a membership:

‘A gateway to a new life in a new town.’

‘A great place to meet like-minded people; to learn new skills or just hone existing ones’.

‘u3a gives me a purposeful activity any time I want - and feel like it!’

‘Accentuates the positive in an active, enlightened and extended Third Age’

‘Learn something new, either a language or a sport.’

‘Be it physical or cerebral activity, dozens of options to choose from’

‘My circle of friends increased exponentially once I joined the u3a.’

‘Not knowing how to fill my time is a thing of the past.’