

## Message from the Chair

Welcome to your first Newsletter of 2024.

I hope that you all had a very pleasant Christmas and are now fully rested and looking forward to the next twelve months of groups and activities.

We often hear retired people say ‘I don’t know how I had time to go to work’ and it is so true. I really can’t see a 40-hour gap in my week! That said, with nearly 70 different topics on offer, we are always looking to add more, so, if you have something – currently non-u3a – that you enjoy and think others may do too, please let us know.



With the coming of longer days, and spring flowers, here’s to a bright and blooming New Year.

Best Wishes  
Veronica

## Group Leader Coordinator's Update

Happy New Year!

It won't be long before we start the process of organising the programme of u3a groups and activities for 2024–2025 starting in September. We could only do this because of our wonderful team of Group Leaders who volunteer to share their passion, skills and knowledge, plus the many members who support the Group Leaders in a variety of ways; from organising a walk, taking the register, putting out chairs etc. These are just a few examples, and every bit helps.

In recent months, two of our Group Leaders unexpectedly passed away, Katrina McDonald and John Standish, and we have been fortunate that group members quickly volunteered to take on the leadership role to enable the groups to continue. We welcome new Group Leaders:

Brian Belcher: Current Affairs

Dot Mariner: Knitting & Needlework

Lyn Reed: Knitting & Needlework

A number of our Group Leaders have been in their roles for several years and, not surprisingly, a few are looking to 'retire' in the forthcoming year. To enable the group to continue and to facilitate a handover, we hope that members of those groups will consider taking on the role, which can be on a shared basis.

We are always open to ideas for new groups and would love to hear from members who are willing to lead/coordinate/facilitate a new activity.

Two such examples are the new courses starting in the New Year:

Cryptic Crosswords which evolved from the member's interest and expertise in the topic.

A Basic Computer Skills course, for members who might be finding this technology a challenge, is being developed by a new u3a member who recently retired from an I.T. training role.

Both these short courses filled quickly and therefore there is an interest and demand for a wide variety of activities. Is there something you could share with other members of Cranleigh & District u3a? If you would like to find out what being a Group Leader might involve, please do contact me:

Angela Hardman: [glcoordinator@cranleighu3a.org](mailto:glcoordinator@cranleighu3a.org)

## Accessibility

As regular readers of this Newsletter will recall, Cranleigh & District u3a recently adopted a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and Maggie Atkins was appointed as our first Accessibility Officer. Maggie got to work straight away but unfortunately, for health reasons, she has been forced to step down temporarily. We wish Maggie all the best, and we will be continuing the work that she started, ready for her return.

A copy of the new policy is available on our website using the link: ([Equality, Diversity & Inclusion](#)). The aim can be summarised very simply – we would like Cranleigh & District u3a to be as inclusive and welcoming as possible to all. We think that all members will agree with this aim, and the challenges for us will lie in finding the best practical solutions for any difficulties that members may face in accessing, or fully participating in, any of our activities.

With that in mind, we would like to hear from any member, or potential member, their thoughts regarding accessibility issues and possible steps that could be taken to overcome any barriers to full participation in our activities. Please email [accessibility@cranleighu3a.org](mailto:accessibility@cranleighu3a.org) with any thoughts or suggestions.

We would also like to hear from anyone who would be willing to help us work on equality, diversity, and inclusion - whether or not they would like to join the management committee.

For more details, please contact Veronica Barnard at [chair@cranleighu3a.org](mailto:chair@cranleighu3a.org).

Maggie had already identified one of the main difficulties members face is being able to hear everything that is said at some of our events. Recognising that many of our members experience some degree of hearing loss, this is the first priority we have decided to work on. However, we would like to hear from members on any issues that they feel need to be addressed.

# NEWS FROM OUR GROUPS

## Flower Arranging

Our u3a flower arranging group have had a colourful autumn session with designs for Christmas, manipulating phormium leaves into roses and mastering a hand tied bunch.

Our ladies are always enthusiastic about their designs and seem to enjoy the chat and sharing ideas in our sessions.

I give below some examples of their lovely work for Christmas.



Linda Loring



## Wine Appreciation

The Wine Appreciation Group celebrated Christmas in its usual, rowdy style, with a selection of fine wines, including Champagne and with free entry as a special treat. The highlight was, however, the Christmas jumper competition, with a bottle of wine for the wearer of the “most tasteless woman’s jumper” and “the most tasteful man’s jumper”. No prizes for guessing who the winners were!



Wine prices have risen sharply in the last twelve months and, perhaps not surprisingly, sales are decreasing, not least because of the Chancellor’s imposition of extra duty on wines with higher alcohol content. It’s not all bad news, however, as supermarkets, including Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Waitrose, seem to be introducing more frequent, or more extended, wine offers, such as 25% off purchases of six or more (mixed) bottles and Aldi had a 25% off offer in the run-up to Christmas. This can result in some great savings, especially if the wines are already on offer. Our Christmas Champagne, for example, was Lanson Black Label, which normally retails for around £41 a bottle but it was bought on offer from Sainsbury’s at £30 and, with the further 25% off, the price dropped to £22.50. It’s not just really expensive wines either and there are many examples of £10+ wines being reduced to £6 or less so, if you look around and can afford to buy in bulk, it really is worth it.

Not every supermarket does these relatively-frequent, bulk offers and Aldi, in particular, offers decent wines at competitive prices throughout the year. Their special offers, however, particularly those that have been publicised in the national press, sell out incredibly quickly and I’ve yet to get there in time. In contrast, the Co-op and Marks & Spencer more commonly reduce prices on particular wines for a period of time and I’ve had more success with finding these in stock. I find out about many of these offers by means of emails from websites that I have registered with, such as “Wines Direct”. The national press and websites such as “Mid-Week Wines” are also useful sources of recommendations for affordable, drinkable wines, whether on offer or not.

I'm now making more use of The Wine Society for sourcing wines, whether they be well-known grape varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc or Malbec, or wines made from lesser-known grapes, or coming from lesser-known countries or regions. The Society, which celebrates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, is a member-owned co-operative and offers wines, including own-label wines, ranging in price from £6.25 to £475 a bottle, with free delivery, even for single bottles. More unusual wines can also be found in some supermarket collections, including M&S's Found Range, Sainsbury's Discovery Collection and Waitrose's Loved and Found wines.

I'm sure, of course, that many of you are now enjoying "Dry January" but, if you are, just remember the quotation, "I feel sorry for people who don't drink. When they wake up in the morning, that's as good as they're going to feel all day."

Happy New Year!  
Graham Pursey

## Speaker Programme

I am really pleased our Speaker Programme has proved to be so popular and we have some very interesting topics coming up over the next twelve months.

On Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January we have well-known local speaker David Rose taking us back in time with A Shopping Basket of Nostalgia in which he looks at how some famous 'brands' came about, often long gone but many that we will still recognise today. His illustrated talk will have lots of nostalgia but is also a story of both commercial and social history.

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April Ian Dowding, creator of the famous, and favourite of the Royal Family, Banoffee Pie will tell us about his career as a chef and how he came to create this dish.

On Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July we Gongoozle and travel some of Britain's 2000 miles of waterways with Neil Sadler.

October is still a mystery, to me and to you, I'm afraid! But in January 2025, the 220th anniversary of Horatio Nelson's death, we will hear all about him by historian James M Taylor.

All our talks are held in Cranleigh Methodist Church, with a start time of 2pm. There is an admission charge of £5.00, which includes refreshments, payable on the door.

I look forward to seeing many of you at some, or all, of these.

Best Regards, Veronica

## Ukulele Introduction Course

I was so impressed when I heard the Cranleigh U3A Ukulele Band, that I decided to join the Ukulele Introductory Group. I spoke with Brian Allen, the group leader, who encouraged me to give it a try. He even offered to lend me a ukulele, to get me started.

Suffice to say, I loved it from the start. With only four strings, the ukulele is a comparatively easy instrument to learn. Brian took us through the basics and as we learnt a few chords we quickly progressed to strumming some simple songs, while singing along. Brian encouraged us to practice often, but for only for five minutes at a time to help maintain concentration levels.

At the end of the Introduction course Brian invited us to join the main ukulele group which meets on Fridays. Three of us did and although its early days it's great fun.

Playing my ukulele is now an enjoyable part of my daily routine, often with my husband singing along!

Kelly Hayton

## Help with social media

Cranleigh & District u3a needs a volunteer to help take forward our profile on the Website and on social media platforms such as Facebook.

If you have these skills, we would love to hear from you.

Please contact Martin Hayton: [webmaster@cranleighu3a.org](mailto:webmaster@cranleighu3a.org)

**Copy for the April 2024 edition of the Newsletter to reach  
the editor by 20th March**

If any members would like submit an article relating to their group,  
please feel free to do so. It doesn't have to be a whole page.

We would love to hear from you.

Please prepare your text as a Word document, photographs in jpg format, and send  
them as separate attachments to your email to:

[newsletter@cranleighu3a.org](mailto:newsletter@cranleighu3a.org)

Thank you!

*Brian*