

January 2024

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Introduction from Sam Mauger

Dear friends,

As we start the year, I'm sure many of you will be thinking of your plans for 2024 – whether that's learning something new, joining u3a for the first time, or continuing with your existing u3a groups.

In our new video, the final in our Learn Something Brilliant Today series, member Marion shares how joining u3a led to her rediscovering her love of painting. I know that many will relate to the supportive and friendly community that Marion has found within her u3a interest group.

Looking forward to later in the year, I wanted to let you know that in October, after eight years with the u3a, I will be leaving the Third Age Trust and taking a break from working full-time.

2024 will be an exciting time as the Trust looks for a new Chief Executive who will take up the reigns to work with u3as across the movement. It is a privilege to work with u3as and to meet the many talented and dedicated people that make u3a the organisation it is.

The staff team and the volunteers here at the Trust are dedicated to the movement and are second to none. I am fortunate to work with them, as well as the many Trustees that I have worked with during this time.

I look forward to speaking with many of you between now and October.

With very best wishes

Sam Mauger



Investing in Volunteers

We are delighted to announce that we have received the Investing in Volunteers accreditation. This accreditation is the result of months of work by staff and Trust Volunteers.

Susannah Hodge, Training and Regional Support Manager at the Trust, says, "I am delighted that the dedication of Trust Volunteers, Trustees and staff has been recognised by

achieving this accreditation. Trust Volunteers are vital to the Trust and this is the continuation of our journey in ensuring that they are well supported, valued and have a positive volunteering experience. We will continue to build on this accreditation this year."

New u3a Short Film

Our new film, Meet Marion, showcases Stapleford u3a Art Group and member Marion.

This is the final film in our Learn Something Brilliant Today series, which has showcased how u3a opens a door to new learning opportunities – from table tennis to art to Welsh Language.

In 2024, we'll be launching our new film series, Share Something Brilliant Today, focussing on the ways that members share experience, knowledge and laughter with each other through their interest groups.

Meet Marion Transcript



Marion: This is Stapleford u3a Art group. We have two sessions, one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and it's once a fortnight.

Sheila, whose house this is, runs them. It's a place in which you can not only paint, but just really enjoy the company and the extraordinary encouragement.

Sheila, giving advice to Marion on a painting she's working on: "Place it on. That's it, now slide it to the right. There you go."

Marion: I grew up in a house where my father was a professional artist and when I left school, I wanted to do what he did, but he just told me I wasn't good enough.

I then got married and had children, sort of pottered around. I didn't get any encouragement there either.

Three years ago, I joined the u3a and then tried this class and I've not looked back ever since. It's been quite, quite wonderful. I'm now 84. It wasn't bad starting in my 80s.

Sheila, she'll encourage you whatever stage you're at.

And everyone in the class is equally positive and supportive of everybody else.

It's done so much for me.

I've always enjoyed drawing and painting but never really shown everyone what I did. I've loved every minute of being here. I now do some work at home as well and don't mind people seeing it.

Your Stories

[Joining u3a was] one of the best things I ever did. I am now helping the members of Porthcawl u3a to converse in Welsh. I pop in to watch the table tennis team at play, attend History, quiz sessions, and most importantly, have made several new friends. At the age of 90 that can't be bad !!

Mabel, Porthcawl u3a

Subject Advice News

Learning More About: Film Appreciation with Subject Adviser Dieter

Subject Advisers are u3a members who share their expertise in a particular subject to help other u3a members set up and run interest groups in their own u3as.

When did your love of cinema begin?

My interest in film is grounded in my childhood growing up in post-war Hamburg in a family with little spare cash. The cheapest cinema showed cowboy films for 1 mark. I will never forget my first film, *The Wages of Fear*. We queued to be the first in with our seats in the front row. It took us a while to figure out our strategic mistake. I loved every minute of it.



What are your favourite films?

All Quiet On The Western Front (1930) – From a novel by Erich Maria Remarque and based on the writer's own experience in World War I, this is by a margin the most effective anti-war film I have seen. Compulsory viewing for a new generation of those who have just starting voting and a reminder for us oldies to work hard for peace in our time.

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) – Wide Screen and intoxicating music (who would have thought of playing Strauss's tone poem 'Thus spoke Zarathustra' as the space capsule tumbled through space in a film streets ahead of the rest.) Leaving the cinema it felt like Shaftesbury Road was alt-reality.

Bicycle Thieves (1948) – Vittorio de Sica's Neorealist masterpiece is set in a world where owning a bicycle is the key to working, but it could just as easily be set in one where the absence of car, or affordable childcare, or a home, or a social security number are insurmountable barriers in the constant slog to put food on the table. It is simultaneously a film for post-war Italy and modern-day anywhere-at-all. It's a powerful, enduring landmark in humanist cinema.

How will you help u3a members planning to set up a new group?

I will inject a sense of realism and help to plan all parts, from the initial idea to the first screening.

News from the Board

Allan Walmsley, Vice Chair of the Third Age Trust

As this is the first newsletter of the new year, it's interesting to do a little crystal ball gazing and see what's ahead of us as the year unfurls. All u3as and networks have already received proposals dubbed Fit For The Future, that include a way of creating a better voice for members. This could be one of the biggest governance changes in the movement for many years, so members are asked to carefully consider the idea and give us feedback.

In the spring, there will be changes to the newsletter, changes to the magazine, and new offers and discounted products available to members – more on this later!

In July, the u3a Festival 24 at York University will undoubtedly be the highlight of the year – keep your eyes on the website as more information emerges.

Then in October, the AGM will be, as always, the opportunity to have your say.

And to top it all, we will be saying goodbye to Sam and hello to her successor.

So 2024 will be a very busy year, and hopefully, it will be a year of change that takes the movement forward.

u3a News



Sunny Climes for Lancaster Walkers

Twelve members of the Lancaster and Morecambe Nordic Walking Group recently went on a trip to Portugal. They walked along the 'Seven Hanging Valleys', the banks of the River Arade and the clifftop walk from Praia da Luz to Lagos. There was of course time for other activities including

swimming in the sea, taking a boat trip into the amazing limestone caves and eating Portuguese food.

Your Stories

Radio has always played a large part in my life from the time I made my own shortwave crystal set when I was a small boy, [to] listening to Radio Caroline, when all the wonderful music came on the scene in my youth. I now enjoy, from time to time, listening to plays while undertaking other tasks in our home.

At this moment in time, I listen to Classic FM when behind the wheel, Boom radio while working with the computer, and on Saturday morning my wife and I enjoy listening to Tony Blackburn.

John, Barnsley u3a

In 2023, we asked about members about your favourite radio to listen to. John was just one of the many members who replied and told us about their connection to radio. In addition to hearing about the specific connection you have to particular shows, the responses revealed that BBC Radio 4 was the favourite radio station of the u3a membership.

Spotlight On:

Brian, Bourne End & District u3a



I grew up in Dundee and moved to the South East after completing my studies. I now live in Maidenhead with my wife Val - we have three grown up children and seven grandchildren.

In 2019, I joined Bourne End and District u3a. A few years later, I saw an article in Third Age Matters about Third Age Trust Trading Limited (TATTL). This is the Trust's subsidiary company that manages activities aimed to provide additional benefit for individual members. **My career was in business management and I wanted to help the movement at a national level so I applied to become a volunteer non-executive director.** I was appointed in 2022.

In addition to being on the TATTL board with the opportunity to input to all its activities, I became involved in the new u3a Friends initiative. This is being launched in February through this newsletter. It will enable individuals to access a variety of resources, services and benefits.

One strand of Friends is Friends Extra, which will be launching in April. There is a wide range of planned benefits. I believe these will provide more choices, opportunities and real savings for those who register (free of charge) to join the Friends community. Testing is now underway for the dedicated Friends Extra website with the launch and communications preparations progressing.

I really enjoy my role and have been impressed by the enthusiasm and professionalism of all my colleagues and the u3a staff, as well as everyone's team spirit.

Headline photos: Bailgate u3a's Vegan and Vegetarian group who explore cooking new recipes together; *Coot feeding new chick* photographed by Julian from Mawdesley u3a and submitted into the u3a eye photography challenge; Downe u3a culinary group, photographed by Alan Chowney from Ballynahinch Camera Club.