



## Introduction from Sam Mauger

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Dear friends,

You may have been enjoying Lunar New Year celebrations this month as we welcomed the Year of the Dragon. This is believed to be a year of change and opportunity and the movement is certainly embracing this with a very exciting year ahead.

Today I am delighted to launch a fresh look for our Friends newsletter which I hope you will enjoy and which reflects the connection we have as a movement.

The newsletter is still packed with the opportunities, fun and learning and will always share your talents and skills. This month a special congratulations to Ilkley u3a on their landmark 2000th member.

Please encourage your friends and colleagues who may not get the newsletter to sign up. We have much to look forward to including Friends Extra which we hope to launch in April.

With very best wishes

Sam Mauger

Join team u3a  
for the Great  
North Run



### Run for u3a

In 2024, team u3a will be running in the Great North Run, the largest half-marathon event in the world, to raise money for the Third Age Trust.

60,000 runners take part in The Great North Run each year – and this year, for the first time ever, this will include five members running on behalf of u3a. Starting in Newcastle Upon Tyne, the route crosses the Tyne bridge, passes through Gateshead and ends in South Shields. The event is taking place on **8 September 2024**.

We have five charity running places available. If you are interested, please email [communications@u3a.org.uk](mailto:communications@u3a.org.uk) by **29 February 2024** – heading your email: Great North Run. Please include the u3a you belong to and if you have run a half-marathon before. Alternatively, you can call u3a office on 020 8466 6139.

### Membership milestone for Ilkley u3a

Ilkley u3a recently welcomed their 2000th member – an incredible achievement. Jenny was the lucky member and received a bouquet of flowers and bottle of champagne.

She is pictured (centre) with Deputy-Chair Peter and Chair Jacqui.

Jacqui says, "We were delighted to welcome our 2000th member to Ilkley & District's thriving community.

"Although being a large u3a presents its own challenges, every new recruit represents a new opportunity, a new skill, a new friend."

The milestone resulted in a splash in the Ilkley Gazette.



### Mosaic Making at Preston Park u3a

Ten members from Preston Park u3a spent a creative and enjoyable day making mosaics.

Group member Christine shared her expertise in mosaics and led the group of complete beginners through the process. They had a lot of fun channelling their creative talents and making decorative plaques. Everyone was very

proud of the end results.

### Chair of the Third Age Trust, Liz Thackray

I love this time of year when the world begins to wake up from its Winter slumber. For the Board, it is the time of year when there is a focus on reviewing the past year – preparing first drafts of the annual report – and thinking about the year ahead.

At present, a major focus is on Fit for the Future and ensuring as many u3as and u3a members as possible have the opportunity to attend a presentation, online or in-person, to hear what this is about and to get questions answered. If you are a u3a member and haven't yet heard of Fit for the Future, there is a section on the member's area of the website with lots of information and links to videos. Your opinions are important!

I've been enjoying seeing the photos in the u3a Keeping in Touch Facebook group, as u3a members share news of where they have been, what they have been doing and what they are planning.

Last month, I was able to visit some London u3as and I look forward to visiting North East England in a few weeks time. u3a offers so much to enjoy and to be stimulated by!

## friends offers

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### Exclusive talk for u3a groups at Barnsdale Gardens

Barnsdale Gardens in the East Midlands is Britain's largest collection of individually designed gardens. On top of the normal group discount, u3a groups of more than 20 can have an exclusive extra – an introduction from either Nick Hamilton or head gardener Jon about the history of the gardens and their seasonal highlights. To find out more, email [groups@barnsdalegardens.co.uk](mailto:groups@barnsdalegardens.co.uk) or call 01572 813 200.

Photo by Steve Hamilton.



## friends stories

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2024 is the year that Saffron Walden u3a celebrates 40 years. In anticipation of this event, we held an Activities and Groups Taster Meeting in January. We signed up 30 new members on the day. Two of the new members have subsequently become coordinators and have formed new groups – Scrabble and New Testament Greek Reading.

*Jim Dwyer, Saffron Walden u3a*

## A journey inspired by film



u3a is all about learning new things and sharing new experiences. We love hearing from members of our Friends newsletter community and sharing your stories. This month, Harold from Shrewsbury u3a talks about his upcoming adventure.

Since 2003, I've been an active member of Shrewsbury u3a, participating in various groups such as folk music, Economics, Natural history, and whist.

Inspired by the film *The Last Bus* featuring Timothy Spall I plan to travel in 2025 from John O'Groats to Lands End by bus. I had mentioned to friends that it was something I would like to do and they said, why don't you?

The first leg will include Inverness, Aberdeen, Berwick, Whitby, Scarborough, York, Leeds, Sheffield, and Shrewsbury while the second includes Aberystwyth, the National Botanical Gardens in Wales, Tenby, Bath, Bournemouth, St Austell. The journey will finish in Tresco.

I am looking forward to seeing parts of the country I have not previously seen. and to revisiting the Eden project and at the end, Tresco Gardens.

As a member of my u3a folk group, I also am excited for Sidmouth folk festival during the journey.


Are you doing something exciting? Let us know by emailing [communications@u3a.org.uk](mailto:communications@u3a.org.uk)

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Headline photos: Grey heron, photographed by Alan of Longton u3a; Wells u3a lighting up the night as part of the Wells Lantern Parade, photographed by Brendon Doyle; Saffron and Walden u3a's Activity and Groups Taster session.

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