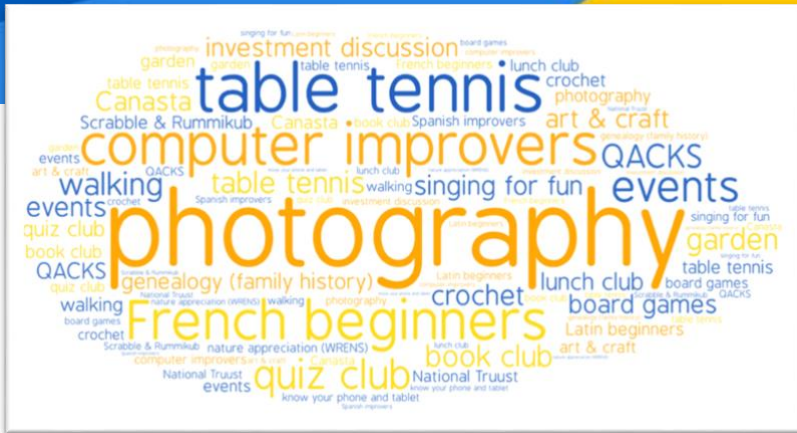


Newsletter



Welcome

It's the start of a new year. I hope you are keeping well and looking forward to longer days and warmer weather – this is the Spring edition after all!

As usual, this edition will include:

- key dates to put in your diary
- news of recent events
- information about future events
- updates from the u3a committee
- spotlight on groups and members
- additional contributions from members.

In addition to keeping you up to date with any news or changes affecting our u3a, we continue to focus on what you've been up to in your various groups.

Thanks to all who've contributed, your news and suggestions are always welcome. I look forward to hearing from you.

Helen Cole, Editor

PS More about me later... I've been volunteered by my committee colleagues to be put in the spotlight!

Groups galore!

As we endeavour to grow our membership post COVID, it's been important that we offer members a rich and broad range of opportunities to participate, socialise, learn new things and have fun. So, last year, after consultation with members, we launched several new groups,

Some groups have proved to be very popular while others are still building their numbers as people discover what's available to them and juggle their diaries in order to participate.

Credit must go to our Groups Coordinator, Jules Everett, who has worked tirelessly to set up these groups and offer support and advice to new group leaders during these early stages.

We now have 25 groups. If you'd like to find out more about what's on offer, there's a timetable on page 4 and news about what our groups have been up to in the Group Focus section of this newsletter or go to our website for further details.

There must be something for you!

Save the date – monthly meetings

12 March

Cuppa, Cake and Chat

An opportunity for all members to meet and catch up, and for prospective members to find out a bit more about u3a, the groups available and how to join.

9 April – TBC

14 May – TBC





Committee Corner

To provide updates on u3a matters and help members get to know their committee.

Finance News

Our budget for this year was to set to maintain a 'break even' situation following last year's slight loss. However, I am pleased to report that despite several unexpected costs it looks as if our u3a will generate a slight increase in our reserve. This is due to an increase in attendance at our monthly meetings together with the slight increase in the associated entrance fee and groups contributing to room hire at the Community Hall.



Gift Aid

As treasurer, I have been investigating alternative means of generating further income for our u3a and, following discussions with other u3a treasurers, I am proposing that all members who are unfortunately still paying tax consider completing the gift aid declaration which has now been added to the renewal form.

Although you may consider it to be an insignificant amount, recovery of 20% on all eligible subscriptions will be a reasonable amount and allow a little bit more latitude when setting budgets. I would encourage you to sign up for this if you currently pay tax on your pension so that our u3a gains some benefit from this.

If you have any queries about this please contact me.

Tony Snowdon

Membership News

Although we have not completely recovered from the downturn in membership numbers following COVID, it is comforting to note that membership continues to grow and that numbers now exceed those forecasted in the budget for this year, with several new members joining since Christmas.

Our u3a still needs to increase our membership levels to ensure that we maintain our sustainability, therefore, I would request your assistance in promoting our u3a. There is now a tri-fold pamphlet, which provides details of our u3a and groups, together with a business card and a free invitation to one of our monthly meetings, which are available to you to distribute to friends, neighbours, or relatives, who you consider may be interested in joining.

Tony Snowdon



Please note: The new Renewal Forms will be issued during March but will not be processed until after 1st April.



Committee changes

Ann Jones is stepping down from her role as Business and Speaker Secretary. A huge thank you to Ann for her dedication and contribution over the last few years.

Trevor Cain has resigned from the committee and his role as Committee Secretary.

Gary Smith is now taking on the role of Business and Committee Secretary.

Martin Cole has also resigned from the committee.

Many thanks to Trevor and Martin for their contribution and to Gary for taking on a new role.

This means we have the following roles outstanding:

- Chairperson
- Speaker Secretary
- Committee Member

We hope members will consider joining the committee to help ensure that our u3a continues to operate effectively in the future. So, if you're interested to find out more, please contact a committee member and perhaps come along to our next meeting to see if this something for you.



A warm welcome to new members

A group of new members met up at Roses Garden Centre cafe for a coffee, a chat and a chance to meet one another and talk about what our u3a could offer them. On the back of this, several have joined existing groups and some had suggestions of new groups... watch this space! Many expressed how happy they were to meet other members who have recently joined and are in the 'same boat'.





Having a Spring clear out?

A reminder to all of our Swap Shop at our monthly meetings where you can swap books, games and jigsaw puzzles. If you've nothing to swap then you can make donation (we suggest £1). Money raised will go into the Newent & District u3a fund.



A helping hand



We're always looking for volunteers to:

- Set up the room for monthly meetings (putting out chairs and tables)
- Serve refreshments during monthly meetings
- Donate a cake for our Cuppa, Cake and Chat meetings

If you can, please consider volunteering to help. Even one month a year would help to spread the load.

u3a Recruitment Events

Two events for the diary:

- **Tuesday 30th April** – we are planning to set up a table outside Newent Co-op to advertise u3a and talk to the public about what we have to offer. We're looking for volunteers to man the stall with others, just for an hour. If you think you can help, please let one of the committee members know you can make it.
- **Wednesday 5th June – u3a Open Day.** It's our annual opportunity to showcase our events and activities to the wider public. More details to follow.





Groups update

The summary below lists our current groups and when they meet. (Not listed is the Events Club as they meet according to the event.) Group Leaders are also listed. If you'd like to try one of these groups, get in touch the Group Leader or via the Groups Co-ordinator.

Week of month	Morning	Afternoon
Week 1	Mon – National Trust Tues – Walking Tues – Geneology (family history) Wed – French Beginners	Thur – Board Games Fri – Know your phone and tablet
Week 2	Wed – WRENS Thur – Spanish Improvers	Mon – Scrabble & Rummikub TUES – u3a MONTHLY MEETING Fri – Latin
Week 3	Mon – Table Tennis Wed – French Beginners Thur – Investment Discussions Fri – Art	Mon – Photography Tues – Crochet Wed – Singing for Fun Thur – Lunch Club
Week 4	Mon – Computer Improvers Tues – Walking	Mon – QACKS Tues – Gardening Wed – Quiz Wed – Book Club Thur – Canasta Fri – Latin

Group	Group Leader	Group	Group Leader
Art and Craft	Carol Woodley	Latin beginners	Haf Ricketts
Board games	Jules Everett	Lunch Club	Ann Humphries
Book Club	Pat Ewing	National Trust	Jules Everett
Canasta	Sandy Darrington	WRENS	Ginny Birkett
Computer Improvers	Robin Lister	Photography	Robin Lister
Crochet	Jules Everrett	QACKS	Janet Furtado
Events	Jules Everrett	Quiz	Janet Furtado
French beginners 1	Martin Cole	Scrabble & Rummikub	Doreen Clive
French beginners 2	Sue Hedley	Singing for fun	Jules Everett
Garden	Judy Eley	Spanish Improvers	Alan Pitts
Genealogy	Gary Smith	Table tennis	Jules Everett
Investment discusssion	Chris Webb	Walking	Chris Walker
Know your phone & tablet	Gary Smith		

For more information about our groups go to the Groups page on our website at:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/newent/groups>



Christmas Cheer

December's Christmas Social event drew a good crowd who enjoyed some festive food and drink while serenaded by the Singing for Fun group's collection of Christmas carols.



The visiting speaker, Robin Burton, shared a potted history of how the modern Christmas developed and the how the practice of wassailing still survives today through role playing and song.

A huge thanks to all who donated raffle prizes, including a magnificent Christmas cake by Liz Higgins.

Your feedback of the event to the committee, is very welcome to help shape plans for next year and encourage more members to come along and join in the festive fun.





Local history is a hit

We had a great turnout for our January monthly meeting talk by Paul Barnett on the Purton Hulks. Paul shared a fascinating insight and personal recollection of the boat wrecks along the River Severn at Purton.



Following our talk from Paul Barnett on 9th January about the Purton Hulks, I was inspired to visit for myself.

On a bright but chilly day, with some friends, we explored the site of the Purton ships graveyard. Thanks to Paul's book "Fore & Aft" we were able to reference the remains of many of the different vessels beached.

I had often heard about the Purton Hulks and it was nice to be able to see these historic remnants close up.

Sandy Darrington



A future for Facebook

A reminder that Newent & District u3a have their own group page on Facebook. This is currently underused, which is a shame as it can be a great platform to catch up and share news and photographs with others of the various activities and events taking place. So, why not check us out on your smartphone or tablet and perhaps add to a conversation.





In the spotlight

Each newsletter we'll be shining a spotlight on one of our committee members. This quarter it's Helen Cole.



I grew up in Tewkesbury and lived in Gloucester for many years before moving to Newent. I started work as a computer operator where I met my husband, Martin. We have two children and three grandchildren. I've also worked in a training department, developing a range of training materials, and a busy school office as a 'Jack of all trades'.

After being diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, I retired early which has enabled me to be much more active and reduce stress – two key factors in fighting this condition.

I love walking, cycling, gardening and of course grandparenting! Martin and I have a keen interest in environmental issues and volunteer for improving biodiversity projects. During COVID, my interest in art was rekindled and I continue to regularly draw and paint too. More recently, inspired by my grandson, I've been making Technic Lego models – great fun!

I've joined a variety of u3a groups (French, Gardening, Walking, Table Tennis and Art), which have provided lots of opportunities to learn new things, discover new places and meet new people. Keen to support our u3a, I recently joined the committee and volunteered to produce the newsletter and look after the website, which has been enjoyable and rewarding.

Helen Cole

Group focus



Anyone for tennis (table)?

The recently launched Table Tennis Group invites anyone looking to stay active to come along and join in the fun. We have access to three tables at the Newent Community Centre to accommodate those learning the game and those who've played before.

We meet at 10.30am on the third Monday of the month. If you'd like to come along contact the Groups Coordinator directly or via the u3a website.

Table Tennis Group

Let's lunch

We continue to have a great turnout for our lunches at the Walwyn Arms in November and The Alma in December. In January sixteen of us experienced good food, good value and convivial company at The Kings Arms.

Dates coming up:

21 Mar – The Full Pitcher, Ledbury

18 Apr – The Royal Exchange, Hartpury

Lunch Club Group





Fantastic Canasta

Canasta (Spanish for basket) is a card game of the Rummy family of card games. Although many variations exist, it is most commonly played by four people in two partnerships with two decks of cards. Very briefly, players attempt to make melds of seven cards of the same rank (a Canasta) and go out by playing all cards in their hands. The scores are then tallied up at the end. The goal for each team is to be the first to reach 5,000 points.

We take it in turns to meet in each other's homes on the 4th Thursday of the month between 2pm and 4pm and celebrate winning (or losing) with tea and biscuits or even sample a brand of Sherry known as Canasta.

Why not come and join us, try your hand and have fun. For more information send a message via the Group Co-ordinator link on the main page of the website.

Canasta Group



Appreciating nature indoors

Dec 2023: We met indoors to discuss our 2024 programme and enjoyed a nature-based Christmas Quiz with mince pies.

Jan 2024: We each researched an animal and shared our findings on how they survive in winter. We were amazed at the variety of strategies they have, to protect themselves from the cold.

Feb 2024: A visit to Nature in Art to see the International Wildlife Photography Competition Results.

We used a crib sheet to decide which image we liked best, comment on the hardship suffered by the creatures photographed and our feelings about the state of Nature from seeing these images. We differed on our favourites but agreed how Nature is suffering due to human actions. A lovely lunch and chat in the café cheered us all up again.

With the better weather, we plan to visit various places in the area, with a nature or environmental interest.



Wrens meet on the 2nd Wed of the month in the morning.
Please email Ginny, Wrens group leader, to find out more. vmbktt@gmail.com



While gardens sleep...

Getting creative for Christmas – Once again, Beryl Griffiths demonstrated how to make a Christmas creation from seasonal foliage – this time a wonderful posy using ivy. Thank you, Beryl, for your patience, and to Pam for hosting such a large group.



“Are you watching closely?”



“The group are let loose to get creative”



“Nimble fingers required...”

Post Christmas meal – There was no turkey with all the trimmings, nonetheless the group tucked into a hearty meal while catching up on the latest news.



“Hope you’re hungry!”



“Dessert or starter?”

Coming up:

26 Mar – TBC

23 Apr – Overbury Court, Tewkesbury

28 May – Hampton Court, south of Leominster

25 June – Kitchen Garden Plants (herbs), Newent



Discovering your inner artist

Christmas crafting – The Art & Craft Group were invited by Glenys to ‘help themselves’ to a vast array of Christmas themed materials to make a card or decoration (or both). The group responded with a variety of creations made from card and wood, using paints, pens, crayons, stickers, glitter and glue!



Macramé magic – There was an amazing turnout, (our u3a Art & Craft Group and some Sheppard House regulars), for the macramé workshop at Sheppard House. Despite the large group, our workshop leader, with support from Carol, were able to guide us through the basics of macramé for us all to produce a chunky bookmark in our chosen colour.



Decoupage delight –

Another enjoyable session decorating wine bottles using paper cut outs and lacquer with some beautiful results.



Thanks to Carol Woodley who has agreed to take on the role as Group Leader. If you have any suggestions for future activities or would like to join the group, then get in touch with Carol.

Please note we are now called the Art & Craft Group.

Coming up:

15 Mar – Felting, Roses Garden Centre

19 Apr – TBC

18 May – TBC



Bonjour mes amis!

Learning French is a popular activity for many u3a members across the country. Not only can it enrich a visit to France (or a French speaking country), but it's a great exercise for the brain, learning, listening to, constructing and speaking new words and phrases.

After a break since COVID, we now have two u3a French Beginners groups up and running, each meeting twice a month at members' homes. Our French tutor, Angela, flits between the two for one of the sessions, while the group manage the other one themselves.

Our learning is structured around the BBC book 'The French Experience'. We also dip into other resources such as engaging short stories, audio clips and magazine articles which enable us to learn and practice everyday French in a relaxed and fun way.

New members are always welcome, whether you know a little or no French at all, then please contact the Groups Coordinator via the u3a website.



French Beginners Group

Technology uncovered

Twelve people attended the first meeting and they were very enthusiastic and keen to learn more about their devices. Lots of questions were asked and hopefully I provided them with some good answers!



We started off by covering security issues, scams, spoofing, passwords and giving out personal details. We then started covering creating an Apple ID and iCloud settings and the options in iCloud.

It was a very enjoyable afternoon which everyone enjoyed and learnt something and even saved money. I have a long list of topics I'd like to cover and hope the group sessions offer an opportunity to learn new things and build confidence in a relaxed and enjoyable environment.

We meet at 2-4pm on the first Friday afternoon of the month. If you would like to join us, please get in touch with me, Gary or the Groups Coordinator via the u3a website.

*Gary Smith
Know your phone and tablet Group*



u3a members go to prison!

The photography group likes to get out with their cameras but sometimes the weather prevails. In anticipation of a bleak January, arrangements were made to visit Gloucester prison. Although this is now disused for its original purpose we learnt that a castle and a prison has been on the site for centuries. Indeed, the relatively recent building additions looked very modern in comparison to the classic Victorian-type of building which represented the most interesting part of the visit for the Group members.

We had the prison to ourselves and were given tours by a very informative and helpful guide for the two hours we were there - before we were released for good behaviour - pleased not to have been incarcerated for longer or as some were, hung out to dry on either the short or 'the long drop'.

We had refreshments and biscuits before we headed the short distance back to Newent, wondering where we might venture to next.

We meet at 2-4pm on the third Monday afternoon of the month. If you would like to join us, please get in touch with Robin Lister or the Groups Coordinator via the u3a website.

Photography Group



It's holiday time!



Includes:

- Luxury Coach Travel
- Return ferry crossing
- 4 Nights Half Board (en-suite rooms)
- Excursions – Godshell, Alum Bay, Shanklin
- Entrance to Ventnor Botanical Gardens
- Entrance to Osborne House
- Return journey on the Isle of Wight Steam Railway

Prices:

- £559 per person (Double/Twin room)
- £604 per person (Single room)



Includes:

- Luxury Coach Travel
- 4 Nights Half Board (en-suite rooms)
- Excursions – Brixham, Plymouth
- Christmas Festivities
- Use of leisure facilities

Prices:

- £334 per person (Double/Twin room)
- £414 per person (Single room)

If you are interested in either of the above mini breaks, then contact Jules Everett, Groups Coordinator as soon as possible, as places will surely be snapped up quickly.



Wellies required!

It's been a very wet winter leaving the lanes muddy and, in some places, flooded.

We had a very short walk along the lanes in Gorsley. As you can see it was well attended.



We passed a house where Alfred Henry Hook VC had lived. (Some of you might remember the talk about him at one of our monthly meetings.)

We all enjoyed a cuppa with something afterwards.



A few hardy types braved the December cold and wet for another short walk in and around Newent. As you can see they had to select their route carefully.

Walking Group



I will go to the ball

The group had an enjoyable visit discovering Newark Park NT, near Wotton-under-Edge. Originally Tudor, the house sits in 700 acres with views down the Severn Valley.

Jules spotted this beautiful ball gown but sadly, not a glass of champagne!

National Trust Group





u3a Members Space

This area is dedicated to additional contributions from you, our members. It could be an interesting fact, a recent u3a experience you'd like to share, a short poem or perhaps a special thank you. So long as it's brief and of course photos are always very welcome too!

Fascinating fact

The first day of spring is called the vernal equinox. In Latin, 'vernal' is spring and 'equinox' means 'equal night'.



Last night me and my partner watched three movies back to back.

Luckily, I was the one facing the TV.
Anon

Books to avoid!



Yes...you can try this at home!

Word of the day:
HURKLE-DURKLE
A 200 year-old Scottish term
meaning to lounge in bed long after
it's time to get up.
Happiness is
HURKLE-DURKLING.

Sent in by Meg Roberts

Did you know...

Daffodils were brought to Britain by the Romans. They believed that the daffodil sap would heal wounds. In fact, the opposite is true. Daffodil sap contains sharp crystals to deter animals from eating the flower. This actually irritates the skin rather than heals it.



What do you call a one-eyed dinosaur?

Doyouthinkhesaurus!

Sent in by Ann Humphries



The Gardener's Year

January brings the seeds
Dreams of beauty, no more weeds.

In February start to sow:
Oh how I hope my seeds will grow.

In March I plant and sow some more,
lovely flowers we all adore.

April is the time for pests.
Slugs and snails and all the rest.

May - oh dear, is there late frost?;
Those tender plants will all be lost.

June brings the flowers and some weeds
too
Always lots and lots to do.

In July there's fruit to get -
but the birds have breached the net.

August is time to have a rest
the garden should be at its best.

September's harvest's lots of work;
dead head, tidy, never shirk.

October's gales bring leaves galore:
heap them up - and then some more.

November not so much to reap
so go and turn the compost heap.

In December, by warm fire,
choose the seeds you do desire.

In January start again:
the year will bring some sun and rain
and I am absolutely sure
my garden **will** be better than before.

Pam Turner,
February 2021

*Pam wrote this poem for the Writing for
Pleasure Group which sadly folded
during COVID. If anyone is interested in
joining a resurrected group, please
contact Pam at
martin@bramblegarth.co.uk as she's
very happy to lead this again.*



Memories

In the chambers of my mind, they dwell,
Whispers of moments, tales to tell.
Memories dance in ethereal light,
A tapestry woven, both dark and bright.

In the silence of the night they roam,
Echoes of laughter, tears to atone.
Each one a treasure, a precious find.
Etched in the corridors of the mind.

Like autumn leaves in a gentle breeze,
Memories flutter, rustling trees.
They paint the canvas of days gone by,
A mosaic of truth, a heartfelt sigh.

From childhood dreams to loves first kiss,
Memories linger, in sweet reminisce.
They shape the essence of who we are,
Guiding us through life, near and far.

Though time may fade them, like distant
shores,
Memories linger, forever more.
For in their embrace, we find our truth,
An eternal testament to our youth.

Trevor Cain





Photograph of the quarter

There was me thinking that, with our smartphones always to hand, that we would all be clicking away during visits or events relating to u3a... however, it seems not, based on the lack of entries to Photograph of the Quarter. Perhaps members don't feel their photos are suitable or worthy enough, so, rather than u3a related photos, it can now be a photograph of anything and anywhere. Again, it doesn't have to be technically brilliant, it could be a poignant or amusing shot, but it should encapsulate a moment of interest and be taken by a u3a member.

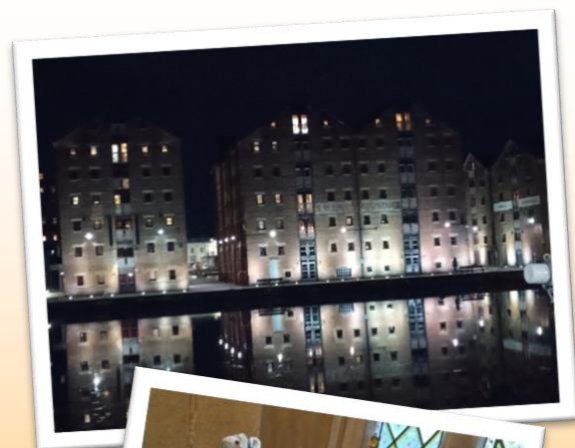


I'm sure some of you do some amazing things, have had some amusing moments with friends or family (or pets) or have visited some fascinating places which you've captured on camera or smartphone...so dig one or two of them out and send them in next time – a reminder will go out nearer the time. If we get a good response, there might be room for some 'runners up' too.

So, Photograph of the Quarter is postponed until next time, but below are some examples to encourage you all.

The Photograph of the Quarter will be chosen by the previous winner. No prizes, just prestige!
Entries for next quarter to the Editor by 14th May.

Helen Cole



And finally...

Remember, if you know of anyone retired or semi retired who might be interested in joining u3a, please share our newsletter – there might be something of interest to them.

Committee members:

- Tony Snowdon (Treasurer & Membership Secretary)
- Anne Jones
- Jules Everett (Groups Coordinator)
- Alan Tugwell (Vice Chair)
- Sandy Darrington
- Gary Smith (Business & Committee Secretary)
- Carol Woodley
- Helen Cole (Newsletter Editor & Website Administrator)



Let's welcome in the Spring

How blessed we are to live within the 'Golden Triangle'. We hope many of you will be able to get out and enjoy our annual treat of the spectacular wild daffodils in Newent's surrounding woods and fields.

Happy Springtime!



Have your say

If you have any thoughts or ideas relating to Newent & District u3a that you'd like to share, please contact one of the committee members. We welcome feedback to help make u3a an appealing and enjoyable experience for all.