



Registered Charity 1159091

N.W.Website:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/northwest>

## N. W. News

## March 2024



**"So blissful! Now I know why we like central heating!"**



**"Well, WE arrived on time. Where's our breakfast?"**

**(Winter's morning in Somerset)**

**Photos by Gill Russell**



### Greetings from the Chair

It's a bit late to wish you all 'Happy New Year' but I hope it's been a good one for you so far. As we approach springtime the NW committee is looking forward to planning some regional events – more about those later in the newsletter. At our last meeting we invited members to join us to find out more about what the committee tries to do. As a result, I'm delighted to announce that we have co-opted have two new members.



Kathryn Fyfe  
Sale u3a



David Findon  
Halton u3a

We are still looking for people who could help with events, either planning them, welcoming attendees, or other short term jobs. We are also looking for someone to help with producing the newsletter. Please let me know if you think you could be a NW STAR member (Short Tasks As Required).

Best wishes. Gill

[u3anwrchair@gmail.com](mailto:u3anwrchair@gmail.com)

**\*Fit For the Future** We held two meetings with the national Chair, Liz Thackray to find out more about the proposal to form a Council as a new part

of the Trust's structure. The first was on Zoom in February and the second was face to face in Warrington. Both meetings produced plenty of discussion but were only represented by about 25% of our regional u3as. If you were unable to attend you can watch the presentation online by using the link below.

<https://youtu.be/JUA68qh6gPA>

**Please note that the Council would not be another layer of bureaucracy. It is intended to reduce some of the workload of the regional trustee and improve communication with u3a members.**

For this reason, the presentation is for all members of the u3a movement, not just for committee members, so please advertise it to your members as soon as possible.

If anyone wishes to send an opinion or observation about the formation of the Council please send it to Neil or Gill as soon as possible, preferably before the end of March.

[u3anwrchair@gmail.com](mailto:u3anwrchair@gmail.com)

[Neil.stevenson@beacon'.u3a.org.uk](mailto:Neil.stevenson@beacon'.u3a.org.uk)

### Dates for your diary

**Big Sing: Saturday June 15<sup>th</sup>.**

**Liverpool.** By popular request, we will hold another Big Sing led once again by Fredrik Holt. Details are being finalised and will be on the NW website very soon with booking details.

**Conference/AGM: Tuesday July 2nd,**

**Liverpool.** NW region Conference and AGM. The morning Conference will involve some short workshops. In the afternoon we will be

entertained by Fool's Gold before the AGM. As always, this event is for anyone so please remind your members. Details will be on the website in due course

**North West Summer School, Carlisle.**

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> – Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August.**

Booking arrangements and details of courses are now available on the NW website events page. Book early to avoid disappointment as we get members from all over the UK.

**Qs & As**

Occasionally we get questions about why u3as are linked to the Third Age Trust.

**What happens if a u3a decides they don't want to belong to the Trust?** If that happens, and the group withdraws its membership of the Trust, they cease to be a u3a. They can no longer use the title and they lose all benefits provided by Trust membership.

**What does the Trust do for us?** The Trust is a support organisation and consists of elected Trustees for the Board and a small office. Their main role is to ensure that u3a members understand their obligations under Charity Law and to provide advice and support to keep the members informed. They also provide benefits such as insurance; create activities online; run a brand centre where you can buy advertising materials; produce TAM magazine and the online newsletters – and more.

**I don't want to pay for the magazine.** Your magazine is part of the subscription your u3a pays to the Trust so you are entitled to receive it. The extra you are paying is for the cost of postage of 5 magazines per year. Some u3as include this in their own subscription; others ask members to pay the extra. The cost of annual postage is approximately the cost of a cup of coffee from COSTA!

**Our u3a is doing well. We don't see any reason to get involved in regional and national activities.** Congratulations. It's good

to know that you're doing well but you are all part of a region and you are all part of the u3a movement. However, your members are entitled to know what is being offered outside your u3a and it is their own decision whether or not they take part so please don't make a decision not to bother telling your members.

**News from the groups.**

**Lancaster and Morecambe** u3a held their first Accessibility Awareness Day in March at Galloways in Morecambe. It was an exceptionally interesting, informative and reassuring day. James Tween, Sensory Impairment Team Manager, Lancashire County Council told us about all the help, advice and gadgets which are available for people with hearing loss. Surprisingly, most of them are free!

Pam Whitaker, Sight Loss Advisor at Galloways gave a very interesting talk about the different forms of sight loss and advised us to always go to an optician, or A&E, if any changes occur in our vision. There were also various gadgets on display which can help make life easier for those with challenges and which can help to keep people independent for longer. Kate Slade, from Lancaster University Medical School, told us about the research which is being done and which may show a link between hearing loss and cognitive decline, although it is in the very early stages. However, she stressed the importance of keeping active, mentally and physically and of course, u3a is

perfect for that. Age UK were also able to give our members some very useful and helpful advice.

Many thanks to everyone who attended the event and to Galloways.

*Margaret Hemmings.*

**Aintree u3a** performed 'Scouse Aladdin' on February 10<sup>th</sup> to 100 members and guests. The Panto was written by our writing group, directed and produced by Iona Janes and Carol Ingham. It featured some Line Dancing and Magic tricks from our Lamp Genie, Sue Hamilton. Everyone threw themselves into it and we were a great team supporting each other. The audience was amazing, and everyone enjoyed us doing it 'Our Way'. Scenes included Greaty Market, Twankey's Wash and Go, Cavern and Albert Dock. The evening raised £600 for Woodlands so it was well worth making fools of ourselves!

*Liz Wilson*



**Formby u3a** What a wonderful day! Formby u3a hosted a Playday for Recorder Players from the North West. Some of the participants came from U3a Recorder Groups and some were U3a members without the benefit of a Recorder Group in their U3a. We enjoyed playing a wide range of music from the 1500's to the modern day, guided by our tutor Andrew Collis. Andrew led us calmly through some quite challenging music with great skill, enthusiasm and humour. The excellent venue was the Friends' Meeting House in Liverpool which was ideal for people coming by train as it's very near to both

stations. Feedback from the players was very positive, especially from people who don't get the chance to play in a large group - they were both amazed and delighted by the great sound a larger Recorder ensemble can make. We were all delighted to hear that we now have a new U3a National Recorder Advisor who has great plans for us - watch this space!

Thanks to all who came and best wishes for future events,

*Fiona Tucker*



**Skiddaw u3a**. Just before Christmas our cycling groups celebrated the end of another very successful year by having their annual mulled wine, mince pies and other festive treats get-together. Prior to the festivities members had set off from Keswick in smaller groups and cycled the Newlands Valley. Some went via Portinscale clockwise around the valley, others via Braithwaite cycling anticlockwise – and only one puncture. Over the year the three groups – Social, Easy Wheelers and Power Bikes have collectively cycled thousands of miles in all weathers, probably covering most of the county. Some favourite routes have opportunities for an ice cream stop-over and there are many favourite coffee shops too.

The group is so successful simply because of the dedicated volunteers



giving their time to create and organise the routes and cyclists.

*David Newton*



### **The Holmes Chapel u3a** walkers'

'trigpointing' group has now completed its second year with 22 members. The group's objective is to find and log as many of the old Ordnance Survey pillars as possible. Some members explore alone while others walk in small groups. The pillars are the four-foot high concrete slabs that were constructed before and after the Second World War to set up a network of accurately known reference points. There were originally 6700 across the whole country – and about 5000 of these are still standing. The most eye-catching pillars close to

Holmes Chapel are probably The Roaches (Leek), and Bosley Cloud (Congleton).

Each visit is recorded on the website called 'trigpointing.uk' along with logs by thousands of other people from across the country, all addicted to this walking hobby. By the end of 2023 the group had logged nearly 400 visits, over 250 of them pillars. They are spread far and wide, the most northerly being in the Orkney islands, called Mid Hill, the most southerly is Saint Martin's Head, Scilly Islands, the highest is Snowdon, and the most remote is probably Outer Edge on Howden Moor (Derbyshire Peak District). Our next objective is to reach 1000 bags – so we need to keep on walking!

*Keith Stevens*

**Southport u3a** will take part in the Southport Flower Show again this year. As this is the Show's 100 anniversary the u3a members are creating a show garden based on the history of gardening over the past 100 years. The Flower Show organisers are already very excited by our design and have offered us a very prominent position. We have begged and borrowed most of the materials we will need to build the garden and so far our excitement level is – well – pretty high!

**Extra news – The dates are 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> August There is a discount for all u3a members who choose to attend, offering £10 off gate tickets when they buy before 31<sup>st</sup> July using the promo code 'SFSu3a', plus free parking. To buy your discounted ticket go to [www.southportflowershow.co.uk](http://www.southportflowershow.co.uk)**

*Christine Howorth*

**Alsager & District U3A 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations.** It has been a privilege as Chair to take Alsager & District U3A through its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. We now have over 1000 members and 59 groups. This shows how our local community values this wonderful organisation. Planning started in October 1997 (26 years ago) when a group of nine local people were brought together to form an initial steering group. They had seen how other local U3As were progressing and felt the time was right for Alsager to look at forming its own group. A first public meeting was held in November 1997 which was attended by 150 members of the local community. 120 of those attending agreed to join and several group leaders were identified.

At our beginning, Membership fees of £7 per member were collected of which £2 went to National U3A which supported both insurance and the monthly magazine. What a beginning, and this support has continued throughout the past 25 years. Even through COVID it was evident that the positiveness of the U3A was there for all to see. Groups were clammering to start with whatever restrictions we had to put in place. The social and mental wellbeing of the members was always at the forefront of our thinking. We were able to continue with groups following national guidelines. We, as a committee, had no idea what membership would be like when we would be able to return fully. I think we now know!! We have produced a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary booklet, looking back over those early beginnings, which has been very well-received. We celebrated in style with a concert by our own 50 strong Orchestra in October 2023 when we packed out St Mary's Church in Alsager with well over 200 attending.



We asked for donations at the end of the concert and £2,000 was raised which was distributed to three local charities and St Mary's Church.

The year culminated in our Annual Open Morning where we showcased all of our groups. A celebratory cake was cut and Committee members from 25 years ago attended.

A massive thank you must go to Dennis Brumpton, Marion Speake, Norman Williams and Val Holtom who were our

first Committee members. Without their enthusiasm and dedication we would not have this thriving, enthusiastic and still growing U3A. It is a great credit to these initial members that we are and will continue to be a successful part of the local community.

If other U3As wish to have a copy of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary brochure please email Alan Bell on [alanbell59@hotmail.com](mailto:alanbell59@hotmail.com) and I will get a copy to you.

**Are you hiding your u3a light under a bushel? Consider that when you read this article by our PR adviser Kelvin Rushworth**

### **Loud and Proud**

For over twenty-five years, together with my sports journalist older son, I have supported the Newcastle Eagles – from when they first moved, as Newcastle Comets, from Sunderland to Newcastle. Even since I moved to live in our own North West region, I have retained that support. Apologies to u3a supporters of Manchester Giants and Cheshire Phoenix basketball teams!

If you have caught the occasional basketball games on TV or YouTube, you will have heard some of the sport-specific chants – most often – “deeeefence”. You may not have heard “Loud and Proud”, usually to encourage shouting and seat-banging, behind the basket, to put off opposition free-throwers. In years of being in u3a, I feel that we can be guilty of ‘hiding our lights under bushels’. The wonderful u3a

movement has so much good news to tell. Every u3a has lots of terrific 'stories' to share, about members and group activities.

More and more, I hope that u3as in the North West will become 'loud and proud' – telling loads of people, any age, anytime, anywhere about our activities and being proud of the fact that u3a is a unique UKwide non-formal learning organisation. Many thanks to those u3as which do this, already. Usually, in addition to your day-to-day activities and complying with your charitable status, it is great that you raise the profile of u3a so very enthusiastically.

**Kelvin Rushworth**  
Public Relations Adviser, North West  
England [kelvinregnat@outlook.com](mailto:kelvinregnat@outlook.com)

**Thank you to everyone who has shared their wonderful stories and photographs for this newsletter.**

**Apologies if I missed anyone.**

**Please don't stop.**

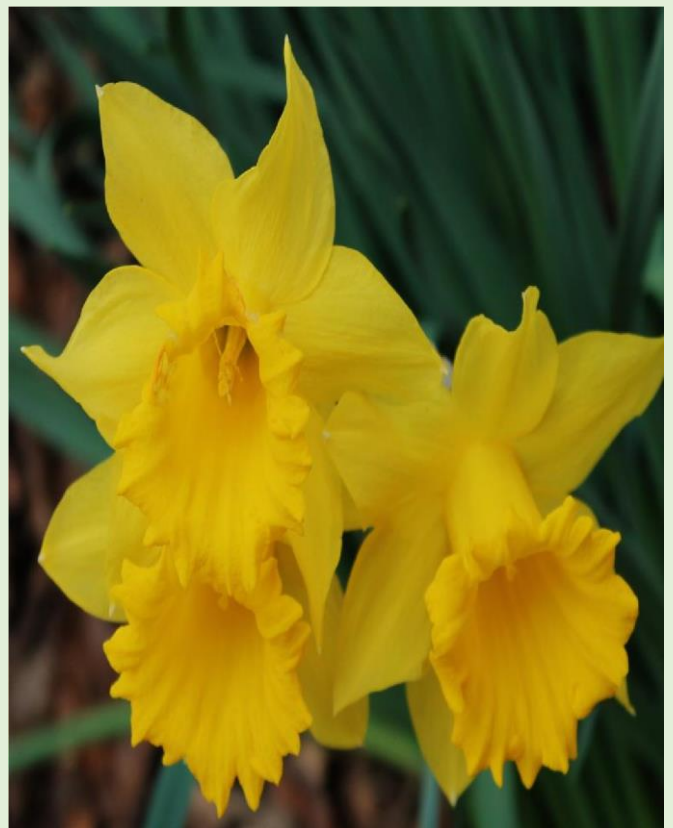
**Next newsletter May 2024. I'll do my best to include as much as possible.**

Send to Gill

[u3anwrchair@gmail.com](mailto:u3anwrchair@gmail.com)

I started with some winter pictures, believing I could finish before the end of February - but time ran away with me.

So I'll end on a cheerful note instead. The sun is shining, the sky is blue. Spring is in the air?



Thanks to Kelvin for sending the daffodils to remind us that winter doesn't last forever!