



Wigan Newsletter

Winter 2023/4

Hello again,

It's that time of year again where the nights are drawing in and the ground is adorned with the colours of the Autumn leaves. Although many of us feel like hunkering down, there is still lots happening in our u3a. Have a read through the Newsletter and maybe sign up for a new group, or book one of our events- there's several to choose from.

Before I finish and leave you to have a read, I would just like to say a huge thank you to the Committee members and the Group Leaders. Without them we would not have a thriving u3a. If you would like to set up a group or to assist a leader don't hesitate to get in touch. Help is there to support you in this.

Take Care, Sue

(from Chairman Sue Wilcock)

Membership Fee Reduction for Remainder of Subscription Year

Our annual fee gives membership from April to March, and although we think it's already a bargain at just £10 per year membership to sign up to Wigan u3A - giving you access to not only our local activities, but also lots of other national u3a trust benefits - we do want to reflect that someone joining now only has a few months left before the April renewal date.

From November 1st therefore the membership fee for new joiners will be dropped to just £6 full membership (£5 if already a member of a u3a in a different area).

If you know someone who you think might enjoy what we offer, then this might encourage them to come along and give us a try.

As we continue to struggle to find new volunteers for group leader roles, to allow us to increase the number and variety of groups on offer, I wonder if it would be useful to remind all our members of how u3a groups are intended to be run. This has a very strong emphasis on learning and sharing.

"The UK u3a movement aims to encourage groups of people no longer in full-time work to come together and continue their enjoyment of learning subjects of interest to them."

This however is very much a pooling of knowledge and experience, to explore new ideas, skills and activities together; a collaborative process – not to gain qualifications but just for pleasure

"There would be no distinction between the learners and the teachers – everyone could take a turn at being both if they wished."

The u3a movement is to be self-funded, members committing to enable groups to pay overheads costs; members would then draw on knowledge and experience to teach and learn FROM EACH OTHER, on topics and activities as chosen by their members.

There are now well over 1000 u3a branches in the UK, with a total membership of about 400,000 people, so our Wigan group is just a small part of something much bigger. U3a's all work towards the five principles listed below.

As you read through the newsletter, could we ask you therefore to have a think about whether there is anything more that YOU can do to keep us operating as intended? Contributing ideas and enthusiasms to add new subjects and topics, considering if you could run a duplicate of one of the over-subscribed groups, or just giving our existing leaders a pat on the back and your *dependable* support for the effort they put in.

Principles.

- 1. The Third Age Trust and the u3as recognise the immense resources of skills, experience and enthusiasm possessed by older people who are no longer in full-time employment.**
- 2. Individual members are both learners and teachers, giving their services freely. All contribute to any eventual costs of using educational or cultural facilities.**
- 3. Membership is open to all irrespective of religion or ethnic origin. No educational qualifications are required or given.**
- 4. Whilst subscribing to the guiding principles of the Trust, each u3a is independently managed by its own members.**
- 5. As far as is practicable u3a members are willing to help other members of the elderly population to organise themselves to achieve similar benefits to those enjoyed in existing u3as.**

News from the Interest Groups

Lots of information here on our regular hobby or activity groups, meeting on a scheduled basis once or twice a month, or in some cases weekly, or on a more flexible pattern to work around going to particular places and taking up outside opportunities. With thanks to all our leaders for their descriptions of what their groups have been up to recently and what's planned in coming months

Ancestry

**3rd Thursday of Month
Museum of Wigan Life, 10:30**

Ancestry restarts again in November, after quite a long holiday break – so this is a great chance to add some new faces to the group. If you've already dived into the fascinating world of finding your family history, then bring along what you've discovered to date and hopefully we can add to previous findings. Or if you are just starting, this is a chance to get an introduction to what sources of information are out there. Maybe a good project for winter months.

Leader: Peter Green

Book Club

**3rd Monday of Month
Royal Oak, 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm**

The Book club continues to deliver lively and interesting monthly chat, covering a wide range of popular books. Also an opportunity to swap favourite reads. Over recent months we have focussed on authors of psychological thrillers, but our (quarterly) move to a different genre takes us into the world of biographies as the next focus.

Unfortunately the informal round-a-pub-table format does mean a limit to numbers accommodated.

There are already quite a few names on the waiting list, however, so plenty interest in starting a second group in a different time slot. What we do need for this though is someone who'll step up and take on the role of just keeping the ball rolling – reserve the table, send out reminders, etc. – Sheila will be happy to advise and help in getting up and running, and give any help and encouragement you need.

Leader: Sheila Wignall

Crafts Group

**2nd & 4th Fridays in Month
BookCycle, 10 am**

We meet twice a month, trying our hand at different skills, most recently decorating terracotta plant pots. Over the next few weeks there will be a Christmas feel to activities making decorations using a number of different materials.

This group however is running at full capacity at the moment, but do still speak up if you have an interest in crafting. It would be great to have a second group in this area, either general crafts or perhaps a more specialist area such as needlecraft or art – so do let the committee know if this is your thing.

Leader: Sue Orrell

Creative Writing **2nd & 4th Thursday of Month** **Postcode Cafe, 1:30 pm**

Our small (but, so they tell me, very select!) writing group continue to meet twice a month. We have purposely kept the group small so that we can have the chance to share and discuss our writing. We now have a waiting list of people who would like to join us and we'll review the situation in the New Year to see whether we have any spaces, or to see if there is sufficient capacity for a parallel group.

We've entered a few competitions recently, some through the u3a and some for wider audiences, and have had a couple of pieces shortlisted.

Whilst we are a very varied bunch of writers, we have had a focus recently on poetry and some memoir writing. A recent prompt from the National u3a was on the topic of 'write a letter to your younger self' – this was really interesting and goes to show that hindsight is, indeed a wonderful thing!

Leader: Sally Lang

Crown Green Bowling **Mon/Tue in Summer Months**

Well another Bowling season coming to an end but what a season we have had. Having 2 days a week for the 1st time to play worked out very well.

A big thank you to Alan, Roger and Mike for helping out and the bowling group for their support, laughter and fun...

Leader: Jimmy Wignall

Cryptic Crosswords **2nd & 4th Friday in Month** **Postcode Café, 10 am**



Never mind what the reservation sign on the table says – not a single “cross” word in this group. Though perhaps the occasional comment on how devious a cryptic crossword setter can be. Or kicking of yourself when you realise you had been off on completely the wrong tangent.

Still meeting up around a big table in the Postcode Café to collaborate on solving a full cryptic crossword, usually from the Times or Guardian but always looking out for new challenges. At capacity for now, but do let me know if this interests you – especially if you'd be a newcomer to this type of puzzle.

Leader: Cath Simpson

Cycling **In Assoc with BeWell Wigan** **Speak to Leader for Info**

Acting as a link to local BeWell cycling team for bike hire and training for those who haven't been on two wheels for some time; or being the leader for some more challenging (but still mainly off road) routes – Ron's shares his enthusiasm for cycling with anyone else who would like to come along.

Leader: Ron Hardy

Dining Out See Events List for Dates and Venues

A group which usually meets up in a local, quality restaurant for a Dining Out Lunch, a Curry Night, or an Afternoon Tea. We also hold occasional pop-up events!

We are continuing into 2024 with a fresh programme of venues old and new from a re-organised team.

The Dining Out Team organise, promote and organise each event. Angela C and Sue B look after our Afternoon Teas. Jenny S and Christina S look after Dining Out Lunches plus Barbara R and Chris M chaperone the Curry Nights.

Nadene F and Stephen H are our all-rounders.

We will be finishing off our 2023 season with an excellent Christmas Lunch at the prestigious Holland Hall. Since forming, we have visited 27 venues and organised nearly 40 events.

Most of our events sell out quickly. Due to the popularity of these events, it is important you book at your first opportunity. Places cannot be reserved without payment ... we do keep a wait list. Sign up to receive regular updates for our activities.

Leader: Stephen Horrocks

French and Spanish Beech Hill Book Cycle 1st Friday/Thursday of Month

These two different groups are both led by Jo, at the Book Cycle venue. A chance to come down and join in relaxed discussions in French on the

Friday date, and Spanish on The Thursday – to practice your language skills and expand your vocabulary and understanding of the language.

Leader: Jo Hunt

Gardening 2nd Monday in Month, 10 am Tesco Community Room

One of our longest standing groups. However after five years of leading the group, and continually finding new topics to explore, Frances is now looking to make this a more relaxed and informal format. Current group members will continue to meet up for a general gardening chat, but there will no longer be a program of what is to be covered, nor any addition of new members in the immediate future.

For other gardening enthusiasts who have asked about what is on offer in this area, we hope to perhaps set up a new, separate group. If that appeals to you, please speak to our group co-ordinator Jon at one of our main meetings, or get in touch through the Gardening page on the website, to give us some idea on possible numbers and particular interests that we might be able to cover. All suggestions and ideas welcome.

Leader: TBC

General History Group 2nd Thursday in Month Cricket Club 10:30

Our General History group is now settled into its regular slot, with each meeting covering a different topic notified in advance, to allow

members to research any particular aspects that interest them. This allows the meetings to be more of a conversation than a talk, with contributions from attendees.

The numbers are limited, to make it possible to operate in this way, but if this is something that interests you then do speak to Eric, although sometimes a place on the waiting list may be all that is available.

Leader: Eric Curless

German Language **No further meetings planned**

Sadly the German group has recently been suspended, as the present leader is needing to take some time out from this. It is an area we would like to reintroduce when we can, so if you do have an interest then please do let our group co-ordinator Jon know to add your name to the list should the group reform.

For now though, can we pass on our thanks to Janice for having taken us from the group start-up to now.

Leader: N/A

Hill Walking **Speak to Leader for Info**

Our walking group that ventures further and higher ...



For an August walk, four of us ventured into the very quiet eastern lakes to climb Hare Shaw (el 1569') in warm and sunny conditions. About 5.5 miles and 930' of climbing. (Pictured)

September however had to be cancelled, I'd just got back from Jordan with bruised ribs, food poisoning and Covid! However October saw us back in the lakes for Garburn Pass, taken from the west, Sallow (el 1673') and Sour Howes (el 1580'), staying dry despite the rain being threatened. About 6.5 miles and 910' of climbing.

Still to come are a trip to Dovedale in November and a more local walk in December, probably on the West Pennine Moors.

Leader: Rick Alston

Indoor Bowling **Monday Afternoons** **Robin Park**

**** New for Winter 2023/4 ****

An alternative now that crown green bowling has stopped for its winter break.

Still waiting for full information, but due to start in November, scheduled for Monday afternoons.

Leader: TBC

Line Dancing **2nd Monday in Month** **Hallgate House, 13:00-15:00**

For a bit of uplifting line dancing you can find us at Hallgate House – generally on the second Monday of each month, although with a **one-off date change to Mon 20th for November**. 1pm to 3pm.

If you fancy some fun, music and dancing in a very relaxed atmosphere and a break for a coffee and chat this is the place to come. Dancing teachers, Ray and Mildred and are very patient and welcoming.



It's a great form of exercise, and no partner required. We are all learners and it is great fun. New members very welcome to join us.

Leader: Angela Grundy

Local Walks

1st and 3rd Friday in Month
See Website for Details

The easy walking group is increasing in size, we have over 80 members now but anyone else is still welcome.

On average we have about 20 members attending each walk.

Jimmy, Roger, Mike and John have all led walks around the local area over the last few months, ranging from the Heapey walk near Chorley to Carr Mill by the East Lancs Road. All have been well attended and most have been in good weather conditions, we have had a couple of missed paths, but we have not gotten lost and have always returned to the start without losing anyone.

If you have a favourite 4 to 5 miles walk, do please share it with us and we can all enjoy it; you only need to show us the way.

On Friday 6th October, John arranged for his friend to join us again on the walk up to Top Lock on the Wigan flight section of the Leeds to Liverpool canal, his knowledge of the canal is very extensive, pointing out many items of interest along the way, and it was very interesting to see the temporary dam across the canal which is holding the water back so that the engineers can make emergency leak repairs to that section due to a sink hole letting the water out.

If you enjoy a good chat, a laugh and a bit of exercise, then contact us on [group email link](#).

Leader: Ray Stafford

Meet and Fish

Speak to Leader for Info

The fishing group is still going strong meeting once a week weather permitting.

Mike Fishwick and Jimmy Wignall are the members and you could say they are the Reeves and Mortimer of Wigan fishing group. Having a friendly competitive spirit ensures the day is fun with competitive banter. New members are always welcome to join us. There is no set date or time; sometimes arranged on the day before. The members fish lakes, rivers canals and pond's...

Leader: Jimmy Wignall

**Memoir And Novel Writing
1st and 3rd Tuesdays in Month
Caffe Rosso, 10:45 – 13:00**

This is our second offering for writers, alongside the more general Creative Writing sessions. This group however is for those who are planning or working on or exploring publishing options for a more extended piece of work. It's a small group, getting together around our cafe table. And very much discussion based, with contributions from everyone – one of our members has described it as rather like an informal tutorial group.

Leader: Michael Hunt

**Music Appreciation
4th Thursday of Month
BookCycle, 13:30 – 15:00**

We have leaders who are actively involved in our local music scene coming along to share their enthusiasms here. Ian and Peter come with experience from their roles with Wigan Jazz Festival, the Really Awful Orchestra, and more, and they tap into a whole variety of music resources and expertise.

A great opportunity to explore different genres and creators and aspects of music. The latest meeting featured a guest host, David Little, Head of the Wigan Music Service, sharing fascinating details of the many ways the Wigan Borough aims to introduce more young people to making music and performing in youth ensembles.

If music and music-making are something you'd like to know more about, do come along and join us.

Leader: Ian Darrington

**Photography
Moving to a new set up ...
Speak to Group Leader**

The Photography group is for anyone who would like to make their photo images stand out a bit more – whether these are taken on smartphone or more technical kit. Finding good subjects to shoot, and photographing them with best selection of angle, light conditions and creative style.

To allow us to include more practical sessions, as well as having more space for the growing group, we are about to move to a new venue of Ince Community Centre; with this also involving a move from a Monday to a Tuesday meeting day with effect from next year. In the interim however, we're working around when the new venue is available and this makes us a bit unpredictable for now. I can however confirm the afternoon of Monday 20th November is a definite date in the diary.

But also, additional to the main monthly meeting, also other more informal options too – including some ad hoc meetups to fit in with events, a possible new 'beginners only' coffee shop slot, maybe some separate photo editing sessions too if the interest is there, as well as other chat and challenges on-line between meetings... New (or returning) members very welcome to come along to November meeting, or to just ask to be included in notifications to join in with a mix and match of any of the above activities to fit with your interests and level of expertise.

Leader: Cath Simpson

Pickleball
Wednesdays, Weekly
Robin Park, 13:00 to 15:00

It might be cold and wet outside, but no excuse not to be getting some fun exercise indoors at Robin Park every Wednesday afternoon, to try out the new 'Pickleball' craze. With elements of Tennis, Table Tennis and Badminton, quick to learn and maybe not so much chasing around. If you already play, a chance to come and get some games; if you've never tried it, then here's your chance

Leader: Chris Spence

Scrabble
Tuesdays or Wednesdays
Postcode Cafe, various

The classic game to test out your vocabulary and strategy, as well as your luck in getting the right letters at the right time! This group is now restarted again, with friendly games over a cup of coffee and cake. Still trying to establish a slot that works for all our players, but do get in touch if you want to join us.

Leader: Jean Jackson

Singing for Fun
Tuesdays, Weekly
Cricket Club, 13:30 – 15:00

Our singing group is back singing again. With a very talented singing coach Lauren Waterworth.

The group meet at the Cricket club every Tuesday 1.30 till 3.00

The group are recruiting members so if you would like the opportunity to learn how to sing and have fun contact Jimmy for further info.

Here are some of the songs the group are learning to sing:
 RUNAWAY, BROWN EYED GIRL, PERFECT, THOSE WERE THE DAYS, CALENDAR GIRL and many more.

Leader: Jimmy Wignall

Table Tennis
2nd and 4th Tuesdays in Month
St Lukes, 13:00 to 15:00

And another newly established group – with games played at St Lukes Church Hall in Orrell, opposite the Orrell Water Park. New members are welcome, at all levels of ability.

Please get in touch with David if you would like to join these 'bat and chat' sessions. All levels of ability welcome.

Leader: David Byrom

Ten Pin Bowling
2nd and 4th Fridays. 13:30
Hollywood Bowl

Another one for the colder months. Barbara and Ron recently restarted the Ten Pin Bowling sessions - meeting inside the Hollywood Bowl for 1.30 start. Fun and relaxing, come and play or just watch. If you haven't bowled before, no problem, others will help you.

Make yourself known on arrival.

Leader: Barbara and Ron Hardy

Theatre Group
See Events List
Various Locations

The Theatre group is proving very popular, and has gone from strength to strength. We continue to visit Wigan Little Theatre,

meeting up in the bar on a selected day (or days) before going in to enjoy the show. This year we've seen 'Guys and Dolls' and 'Spirit Level', and most recently 'Business of Murder', a psychological thriller about revenge.

A group of 37 headed out to watch 'Titanic the Musical' at Liverpool Empire. After that came a murder mystery event in Hindley, performed by Bravo Theatre Company.

Coming performances are 'Home, I'm Darling' at WLT in January Then 'Come from Away' at the Liverpool Empire in March - an award-winning musical based on the real-life story of air passengers grounded in Newfoundland, after 9/11, and the community who invited them in with open hearts.

We also make trips to local theatres for backstage tours, with lunch options included – most recently to the Liverpool Empire (pictured); now looking to arrange a visit to Bridgewater Hall in Manchester in January or February.



Keep an eye on the events list for our future plans.

Leader: Jenny Swift

Ukulele Group New Leader Required for Group to continue into 2024

The long-standing, popular Ukulele group may be winding down, with just one last meeting planned as a Christmas Party session with drinks and pizza, and then some final fundraising performances.

Stephen will then be stepping down as leader as he looks forward to more adventures on the high seas, teaching Ukelele on cruise ships.

The group is well established and has a great venue, but no-one has opted to take the reins as yet. So as things stand, the group is about to come to the end of a good run – after having had lots of fun building up their skills and a great Song Book and Christmas Book, some tunes even self-penned!

As ever though, there is still some seasonal performing to raise funds for various local charities. This has already seen the "Pie-eaters", a mixture of Wigan and Ashton U3A ukuleles, performing at the Hamlet at Three Sisters – playing and singing as Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham opened the new extended facility at the Hamlet Lakeside complex, and being persuaded to sing along.



Still to come, back to Hamlet for their Christmas Fayre on 25th November and then performing in Sainsburys on the 2nd and 3rd December, raising money for the 'Fur Clemt' (community café and foodbank). A final chance for all members to come and support them and join in the great fund-raising efforts.

Leader: Stephen Corless

Urban Sketching 2nd and 4th Weds in Month Various 10:00 - 12:00

It's been a lively sketching summer with some interesting trips outside the Wigan area, including Castlefield Viaduct in Manchester, The Atkinson in Southport and Astley Hall. The highlight was getting up close during filming of Landscape Artist of the Year at Liverpool Pierhead.



The group – pictured above on a relaxing morning at top lock - has expanded to 20 members now and rather than split the group we have decided to suffer the consequences and stay together, continuing to squash into cafes and pubs for our throwdown of sketches and chat.

So, sadly we are putting up the GROUP FULL sign for now. Please get in touch with Sally Duggan via

the Urban Sketching page on the u3a website if you would like to be added to our waiting list. If anyone is interested in setting up a second Urban Sketching Group, Sally and the current group would be happy to advise and assist.

Leader: Sally Duggan

Wine Appreciation 1st Tues in Month, 19:30 - 21:00 Highfield Cricket Club

In addition to the usual 'round the world' tour of wine offerings in the monthly meetings, this summer saw some of the group heading over to Spain to get even more in the spirit of enjoying wine drinking.

Several members of the group made the trip to help celebrate the grape harvest in Logroño, the capitol of La Rioja in northern Spain. We enjoyed four days of partying - barbeque, fireworks, parades, bull running, tapas and tastings, followed by three days at leisure including visits to Marques de Riscal and Bodegas Vallemayor for tutored tastings.

Leader: Mike Crickett

Yoga Each Monday, 10:30 - 11.30 St Andrews Parish Hall

Our Monday morning Yoga sessions with Ali continue to be a great way to start the week. We've recently begun to dabble in some beginning of the week meditation which is a great prelude to some asanas (yoga moves). We're not yet up to headstands or doing the splits – but watch this space!

Leader: Alan Lang.

AND NOT FORGETTING OUR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES, OUTINGS AND GENERAL MEETINGS

Of course, it's not just activity and interest groups that the u3a offers; great though these are for finding new and like-minded friends, picking up new skills, trying out new pastimes, and just generally keeping active and young-at-heart.

For anyone who simply wants opportunities to meet for coffee and chat, or to head off on outings to different places, or have a night of music and dancing at evening gatherings – we also have a range of wider social activities and open meetings.

In the last few months the social team have organised our July Summer Ball and September Barn Dance. Still to come are our December 9th Christmas Party and a further party night on February 10th next year – each with different musical acts and catering options. Since the previous newsletter we have had outings to the Manchester Castlefield Viaduct Garden, for Afternoon Tea (Lowry Hotel), plus a coach trip to Yorkshire to visit both Shibden Hall and Piece Hall. There have also been various other music and other events where you could join fellow members, even if not specifically u3a organised.

You're also invited to our regular 'Speaker's Mornings' – just one topic left for this year on Dec 6th, featuring a Polish Life Story and a Polish Christmas, but then a whole new list of topics and speakers for 2024 including global fundraising challenges, music, travel tales, the law, a wartime heroine and working in TV. Plus the drop-in 'Members Coffee Morning' each month, to check out any new offerings, chat to the group leaders and get signed up for upcoming events. And additionally for those Wednesdays when there is neither a speaker nor a members meeting, a regular open invitation to join us at the Royal Oak on Standishgate just for a Coffee and Natter for a couple of hours.

Aiming to be somewhere that people can make new friends and join in with a variety of activities and visit new places. Making the best of that extra leisure time that we have when no longer caught up in the demands of a working life.

Hopefully you have found this newsletter a great summary of what we offer. However, things do change, so for the very latest details, dates and information, please do also see our local website:
<https://u3asites.org.uk/wigan/home>