

## **Chair's Report**

**S**o....we've already seen the first storm of the year....what a way to start 2024!!  
I do hope you have all managed to get through with as little damage as possible!

At our first Monthly Meeting of 2024, we welcomed James Taylor who entertained us with tales of his collection of Picture Postcards. The meeting was well attended with 115 members and a couple of guests. In fact, there were also several new members present, and I hope to get to know them better at a Welcome meeting next month.

The Groups that I belong to have some exciting things planned for the coming months, and I'm sure you will all be looking forward to sharing fun experiences with the friends and members within your own Groups too.

So....Welcome to 2024, and very best wishes to you all for another year of fun and frolics with our u3a.

**Melanie Blewer**

## **Next Monthly Meeting**

**Thursday, 1st February 2024 at 2pm**  
**ROSS NEWHAM**

### **The History of East Malling Research Centre**

**R**oss Newham is Head of Communications at East Malling Research (EMR) in Kent, where he assists in the delivery of science messages to the many varied audiences of the organisation. His horticultural career started in Bedfordshire, growing veg, salad and cut flower crops, before working at a garden centre producing nursery stock, bedding and pot plants.

## **March Monthly Meeting**

**Thursday, 7th March 2024 at 2pm**

**Please note that there will be a change of speaker for this meeting. Please watch your inbox for an email soon, detailing the changes.**

## **Groups Coordinator**

**T**he new year has begun well with 75 groups preparing full diaries for 2024.

All your convenors hope to meet in March, if they are free, in order to review their tasks as your group leaders, and also establish what they hope to gain from having a Groups Coordinator. This is the time to become involved in the direction of developments and pass on your views! Decisions must also be made very soon about a format for sign-up day so consideration is being given to that too. Pass your thoughts on to help convenors make those important decisions.

The Classic Vehicle Appreciation group has had a name change! It is now The Historic Vehicle Group and new members with a shared interest will be most welcome.

Enjoy the year ahead and join in as fully as you can.

**Kathy Booyen**

## **Lunch Club**

**L**unch Club will be going to The Early Bird pub at Grove Green, Maidstone for lunch on Friday, 16th February at 12noon for 12.30 pm. Please let June know as usual if you will be joining us by Monday, February 12th.

I look forward to seeing you there.

**JUNE ROSE**

## **News from our Groups**

### **Birdwatching**

**A** small group of us met at the Sevenoaks Kent Wildlife Trust reserve on a gloomy morning but despite the conditions, we managed a creditable haul of 35 species. The forecast heavy rain failed to arrive and we were able to circumnavigate the main lake accompanied by occasional drizzle only once needing to seek shelter in a hide.

We were greeted by a sizable flock of Egyptian Geese, these birds are now more common in Kent. A skittish flock of Lapwings were



put up but we were not able to find the cause. Arriving at the first hide, good views of several duck species at close quarters was possible; drake Teal and Mallard now appearing in breeding plumage. Further into the lake, Great Crested Grebes were present but no signs of mating display yet from the males. Close to the hide, Snipe were observed, probing at the boggy water edge. We were thrilled as the electric blue of a Kingfisher flashed across our view.



We searched in vain for Siskins and Redpoll feeding on Birch or Alder but were delighted to find a party of Redwing which landed for a rest,

perhaps they were en route back to Scandinavia. Further round the lake, Barbara spotted a tiny bird which was confirmed as a Goldcrest. Pochard was added to the list of ducks and we were impressed by a flock of Canada Geese and a further flock of Greylag Geese on the flooded meadows of the River Darent, better still was a large flock of Greenfinches, a rare sight these days perhaps seeking shelter from the next phase of stormy weather.



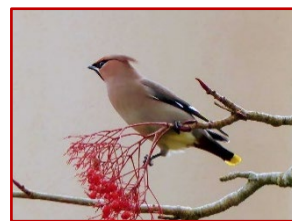
At the next hide, we added Shoveler to the list and could watch a pair of Herons nest building. The male would bring in branches which the female used to carefully

weave into the nest when she was able to avoid his intentions. We followed the course of the Darent, just a chalk stream here until the final hide where we could see further heron nests. A brief view of a hunting Sparrowhawk completed our visit.

As we returned to the car park we were thankful that rain had held off and reflected on a decent day's birdwatching. Thanks to Janet and Robin for the photos.

There was much excitement earlier in the month when a small flock of Waxwings from Scandinavia made Kings Hill their temporary home as they searched for berries, so if you saw people with

telescopes and cameras standing around that is what they had seen or were looking for. Group member Neil took this cracking photograph.



John Lambert

## Contract Whist

We had a very good turnout for our first session of the New Year and a lot of fun was had by all.

Peter was eventually the highest scorer with 174 but Lin was keeping him honest until the very last hand when he just pipped her.

Our highest successful declaration was Helen with 7.

However, the highest-ever declaration of 9 was made by Jo who unfortunately did not make it but got 12 instead!!!! What an achievement.

One of our members has resigned so we have room for 1 or 2 more, so if you'd like to join the fun let me know.

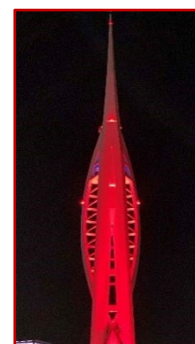
Michael Martin

## Digital Photography 1

Our first theme was 'Gates'. We viewed wrought-iron gates, wooden gates, metal gates, church gates, ornate gates, neglected gates and The Brandenburg Gate.

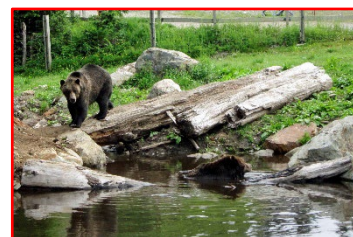


We then moved on to 'Landmarks' where we saw two different photos of Portsmouth's Spinnaker Tower, lots of London landmarks and



iconic structures throughout the world.

Among the diverse pictures featuring the letter 'B' were boats, birds, teddy bears, real bears and the butchery counter at Harrods.



Cathy Sargent

## Digital Photography 2

This month we had a full complement of members.

Last month it had been decided to do something different and Altered Images was chosen as one of the subjects. All except one person used their phones to take photos. The first was taken on a camera and then altered to change its presentation into a curve to make it more effective. To me, it looks like an eye.



The next was altered using an iPhone and when asked how it was done we were told they had just worked their way through the options available until



they found one they liked. It really enhanced the original photo and I must admit that I may try to replicate it for my door wreath next

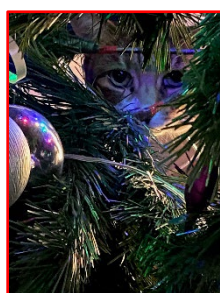
year. It would make a change from the usual red and green.

Not all images improved once they had been altered although it has encouraged us to explore this aspect of our photography.

Letter W produced this picture of some planted-up Wellingtons beside an ornamental pair.



The next one of the cat peeking through the Christmas



tree was what we chose for "Pets". It looks as if it is saying "I'm here but you can't see me".

After we had looked at all the submissions, we thought it might be of interest to have a session where we shared the options available on our phones and how they could be used to the best advantage.

As always, the meeting was full of fun and laughter as well as discussing the images we shared.

Take care.

**Brenda Powell**

## Don't Get Me Started

The topic chosen this month was "The pros and cons of bottled water versus tap water".

Due to the change of meeting date and the inclement weather, the total attendance was only five members. Despite this, the debate was lively and well contributed to as the topic was pertinent to all.

Is UK tap water safe to drink? Yes, apparently so, despite a dedicated Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) there are questionable levels of pesticides, nitrates, heavy metals - such as lead and copper - and microorganisms. Whilst UK tap water is considered among the safest in the world, these pollutants still exist. Thereby, prompting the increasing use of filtration units within homes. Filtration unit manufacturers make exaggerated claims regarding their benefits notwithstanding the initial and replacement costs. Many concurred that filtration does not remove all harmful elements.

UK tap water boasts to be one of the best in the world and can still consist of up to 14 different chemicals and even other people's pharmaceuticals including hormones. Despite this, the DWI has not taken any action to date to rid tap water of these pollutants according to a study by Brunel University. It was argued that one river source tested positive for 45 different prescribed drugs including the anti-epileptic medication Carbamazepine.

As for bottled water, the consumption is reported to be increasing dramatically at 7% per year worldwide. Reportedly a billion plastic water bottles are disposed of daily worldwide into landfills and the seas. Less than 10% of the plastic bottles are recycled. Behind the often-extravagant marketing claims, the quality of most bottled water is no better and often far inferior to tap water. The cost to the global environment is often overlooked and underreported. Bottled water also competes for water resources.

One disturbing element in using bottled water is evidenced by the high levels of phthalates which is a class of man-made chemicals used in the manufacture of plastic bottles. This is used to make the bottles durable and flexible. There is clear evidence now, showing that phthalates seep into the water causing bowel cancer and fertility issues, especially in men. Phthalate particles have been found in marine life, in human blood and also in the air.

It was agreed that water is the basis of life, and hence should not be left in the hands of multinational companies to benefit at the expense

of all. A government bill to call for compliance by all involved in water supply may be the way forward. In 2022 the EU directed all water suppliers to comply with minimum safety levels, giving suppliers a 2-year grace to deliver improvements. The UK government is not following any such directive as yet.

**Angelene Rothwell**

## Easy Singing

**W**hat an end and start to the year! After our Christmas gathering, our January attendance was brilliant and to cap it all 12 of us went to see Abba Voyage on Sunday 7th.



Joy got us some brilliant seats. We went up in an exclusive minibus and we got back about 8pm. We



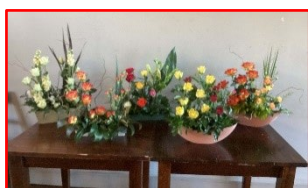
were all dumb-struck at what we were seeing and marvelled at how it was done. If you like Abba, try to see it, you won't be disappointed.

Happy New Year to all members.

**Gaynor Trevet, Joy Watson & Beverley Duval**

## Flower Arranging

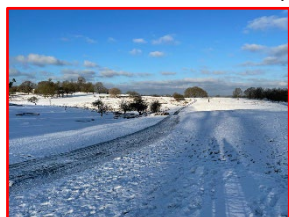
**A** lovely selection of arrangements showing the talent of our members.



**Silvie Knowles**

## Full Day Walks

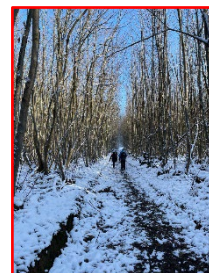
**W**e have currently abandoned our 1066 walk mainly due to the short days and wet conditions. However, on Tuesday 9th January, we did a local circular 11-mile walk from where we parked our cars at the back gate of Knole Park to Ightham Moat and returned to our cars on the Greensands Way.



Seven of our group set out on a cold windy day with 3 inches of snow on the ground. We found it very exhilarating in the snow-covered park with herds of deer and magnificent stags. The going was very muddy and slippery. Our first coffee stop was at St Lawrence's Church at Seal Chart, where we all managed to find seating in the porch.



Our group continued and arrived at Ightham Moat and were relieved to find the café and toilets were open, as we were told the day before that they had been closed. We found a table outside sheltered from the wind and in the sun where some of our party had stew and soup from the café and some of us enjoyed our packed lunches.



The return walk was uphill, following the Greensand Way with fantastic views overlooking Sevenoaks and Bidborough Ridge. Some parts of the route were very steep and slippery, with an elevation of 1,085 feet of undulating paths. We eventually returned to our cars around 3 pm with muddy boots after a great exhilarating New Year's walk in the snow with good company.



**Richard Bowles**

## Gardening Group 2

**S**even members met at Patricia's home in Sandling on 17th January - a rather cold day. Patricia told us of her plans to build a garden on land she owns to raise funds for the Dementia Society. It would provide a quiet place to visit and relax with ambitious future plans to add a tea room and sell plants in order to raise money for the charity.

She had been growing cuttings in her garden to transplant to the site, at a later date. Patricia walked us through her garden showing us the many cuttings and plants she had already successfully grown.

We also debated protecting bulbs during the early growing phase from animal pests, squirrels in particular. Jill has covered her pots in green netting

and will only remove it when the bulbs have made good growth.

To round off, we were treated to hot drinks and homemade cake to help alleviate the cold.

**Julie Glew**

## Half Day Walks

The recent rain meant Alex kindly re-planned his 5-mile route from Leybourne Lakes Country Car Park to ensure that we walked on a hard base rather than mud!

We set off around Ocean Lake, out to New Hythe, along the Medway to Snodland paper mill. Then, back via the Millstream to the Refuel cafe where some of us encountered the Walking with Dogs group. Using Autopay for the car park ensures that you only pay for the time you are there.



**Alex Heselgrave**

## London Walks 2

Something different this month....on a snowy winter morning, we 'visited' London from the comfort of The Spitfire!!

Six of the group gave presentations on aspects of London ranging from Alexander Palace, Fortnum and Mason's, Waterloo Station, St. Dunstan's in the West, London before the Romans and Film locations around the city. Such very different 'views' of our capital city and an informative and enjoyable way to keep warm in January!

**Melanie Blewer**

## Makers of History

Our monthly meeting usually features someone who has made a positive contribution to society, and sometimes a person who has been overlooked by history. This month, we made an exception to the rule in a talk entitled "Double Trouble," which focussed on two people who spent a significant proportion of their lives locked up. The two people in question were the Kray Twins.



Reggie and Ronnie Kray were born in East London in 1933. At that time in that area, it was very unusual for twins to be born and both survive, so they and their mother were marked out as "special." They were doted on by their mother and very spoiled.

Being handy with their fists they were enrolled into a local boxing club in Bethnal Green, and could probably have made careers as professional boxers had their criminal activities not got in the way.

Having spent most of their years of National Service either AWOL or in military prison, they took over the running of a billiard club in Mile End, and enlisted others into their gang or "Firm". They soon realised the possibilities of running a protection racket.

They opened various nightclubs and having taken over a nightclub in fashionable Knightsbridge in the early 1960s to seek more glamour, publicity and celebrity, they were soon rubbing shoulders with stars of stage and screen in addition to prominent politicians. Money was rolling in, and they became well-known celebrities in their own right.

After an altercation with members of a rival south London gang, Ronnie Kray (who suffered from mental illness) shot and killed George Cornell in a Whitechapel pub. Nobody was willing to identify him, so it seemed he was untouchable. Subsequently, Ronnie urged his brother to "do one" (a murder) too. After Reggie killed Jack 'The Hat' McVitie, the police finally arrested both brothers and people who had been too frightened to speak out against the twins began to do so.

The twins were tried for murder in 1969, found guilty and sentenced to a minimum of 30 years in jail. Their mother, who always believed her sons to be blameless, visited them both every week. Ronnie was subsequently transferred to Broadmoor Secure Hospital on account of his paranoid schizophrenia.

Ronnie died in 1995 and Reggie in 2000. Thousands of people lined the streets of the East End for the funerals of both brothers. Over the years many books have been written about them in addition to feature films. Although almost a quarter of a century has passed since Reggie's death, the names of the Kray twins remain well known, and fascination with their lives continues.

**Margaret Hall**

## MOTO

January was a busy month for cinema-goers. On 1st January three of us went to see Anthony Hopkins film "One Life". A true-life story about Sir

Nicholas Winton, an amazing humanitarian who saved the lives of almost 700 Jewish children by enabling their evacuation from German occupied Czechoslovakia just before the Second World War.

On the second occasion, three of us went to see "The Boys in the Boat". Again, based on a true-life story about the University of Washington rowing team. It covers the rise from their beginnings in the Depression era and how they went on to win gold at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. We all agreed that both films were well worth seeing and were enjoyed by us all.

A couple of us went to see "Napoleon" at Maidstone Odeon. It was interesting to see the life story of this iconic military man. Lots of battle scenes and a very surprising story about his obsession with Josephine, much of which we didn't realise. Before the film, we enjoyed a quick and tasty burger at the food stalls - better than expected!

Almost 40 members of MOTO had a lovely Carvery



Xmas lunch at the King's Hill Golf Club on 10th January. There was a choice of beef, gammon and turkey with all the trimmings and Christmas pudding or ice cream to follow. Many thanks to Mary Mortimer for arranging this.

**Vivienne Lindridge**

## Pickleball

Seventeen of us played on 19th January at Larkfield Leisure Centre. We play fortnightly 10.00 - 11.00. The next meeting will be on Friday, 2nd February. The cost is £1.80 entrance fee for non-members over 66 years of age (£3.10 for those under) and £2 per person towards the cost of the courts.

If this is of interest to you or you would like more information I can be contacted at 07305-926811 or roycsimpson@hotmail.com

**Roy Simpson**

## Play Reading 2

This month four of us gathered to read "Dangerous Obsession" by N.J. Crisp. Certainly not one of our comedies! An intriguing play with many twists and turns.

On a beautiful day in the Home Counties, Sally Driscoll is in the conservatory of her luxurious home watering the plants, wearing only a swimsuit. Suddenly a bespectacled, suited man appears at the door, John Barrett. Is he selling double-glazing? No, certainly not!

It appears that the Driscolls had previously met Barrett in Torquay. After some exacting wordplay and the arrival of Mark Driscoll, it seems that Barrett is "dangerously obsessed" with pinning the blame for an accident (involving his wife) on someone.

Gradually the tale unfolds, revealing conflicting facets of the Driscoll's lives. These are gradually stripped away by Barrett until he leaves as suddenly as he came.

He leaves behind broken trust, shattered faith and a marriage that will probably never heal.

The play had a very successful run in the West End starring Dinsdale Landon, Carol Drinkwater and Jeremy Bullock. It provided us with a most enjoyable, entertaining (if sometimes exacting) afternoon.

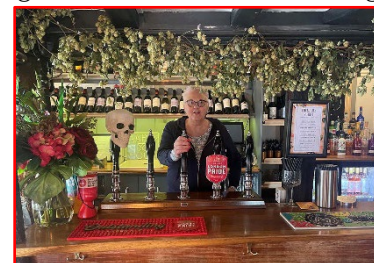
**Esme Streatfield**

## Pubs, Pies and Pints

In 1492 Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue - and the Walnut Tree in Yalding was first built as a Tudor yeoman's house.

In 2024 our group regaled ourselves there, eating pies of steak and blue (cheese, that is).

Twenty of us gathered for the group's biggest outing yet.



For one of our group, Eve, it was a nostalgic visit. Her grandfather, Fred Strand, was the pub's landlord in the 1960's and she recalls playing behind the bar and even helping herself to beer from the taps on the barrels. Luckily there was no such bad behaviour by any of us this time!

**Maurice Chittenden**

## Ten Pin Bowling

There was no Bowling in January, but the next meeting has been booked for Wednesday, 7th February at Hollywood Bowl Maidstone. The cost for 3 Games is around £10.

If this is of interest to you or would like more information I can be contacted at 07305-926811 or roycesimpson@hotmail.com ☎

**Roy Simpson**

## **Theatre Group**

**A** group of 37 from the Theatre Group went to the Piccadilly Theatre, London to see the excellent Moulin Rouge. Owing to the popularity of the show our seats were all over the Stalls and Royal Circle.



The superb brightly lit stage got everyone's attention even before the show started. It was not what we expected and was a spectacular offering of dancing and music, with over 70 songs in part, being covered. The music was modern-based featuring Elton John, Queen and Status Quo songs amongst lots of others. It appeared to be extremely well received by all.

February we will be organising our 4th group visit to A Witness For The Prosecution for any members who have not seen it already.

Should any members wish to join the group to receive details of offers for London shows please email me at folderspring@tiscali.co.uk

**Laurie Frowde**

## KHaD u3a Information

### Monthly General Meetings

These are held on the 1st Thursday of every month in **The Kings Hill Community Centre**, off Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling, (Near ASDA) at 2:00 pm. We usually have a speaker following refreshments and a social get-together. Our meetings are normally very well attended, and it is recommended that members plan to arrive early (soon after 1:30 pm) in order to secure parking and reduce queuing for registration and refreshments.

Entry to the monthly meetings (including refreshments) is included in an annual £20 fee (currently reduced to £15), which also includes membership in the Special Interest Groups. Guests may attend monthly meetings for a maximum of three visits, at no charge, prior to becoming full members.

### Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

The Special Interest Groups meet at various places, and often these are in a member's house to avoid fees for hiring a venue. Contact the Groups Coordinator and convener before you attend.

See the website for a full list of SIGs and contacts, and watch the Newsletter for their latest activities.

**Cancelled Meeting:** If the General Meeting must be cancelled for any reason, we will try to get a note on the website by 11:00am on the morning of the meeting, so please check there if you are uncertain.

**Parking:** There is a small tarmac-surfaced car park at the Community Centre, but this fills quickly. There is an additional parking area to the east of the Community Centre. Otherwise, there is a large public car park behind **ASDA** (3-hour parking limit) and another on **Crispin Way** to the south. All of these parking options are shown on the map below...

### KHaD u3a Committee

#### Officers:

Chairman	<b>Melanie Blewer</b>
Vice Chairman	
Treasurer	<b>David Murray</b>
Business Secretary	<b>Maggie Bishop</b>
Membership	<b>Mark Richards</b>

#### Other Roles:

Groups Co-ordinator	<b>Kathy Booyen</b>
Speakers	<b>Sue Christie</b>
Hospitality	<b>Brenda Pretty</b>
Diversity	<b>Simon Ellis</b>
Events	<b>Deborah Langworthy</b>
<b>Plus:</b>	<b>Maurice Chittenden</b>
	<b>Don Bone</b>
	<b>Elaine Scutt</b>
	<b>Sue Watson</b>



### KHaD u3a Website

[www.kingshillu3a.org.uk](http://www.kingshillu3a.org.uk) (Ctrl+Click)

### Membership Enquiries

[membership@kingshillu3a.org.uk](mailto:membership@kingshillu3a.org.uk)

**Newsletter** - SIG reports and photos deadline: Friday before each General Meeting.

**Editor: Don Bone** - [newsletter@kingshillu3a.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@kingshillu3a.org.uk)



To see us on Facebook [@u3aKingshill](https://www.facebook.com/u3aKingshill)



January 2024

Phone National Office: 0208 466 6139 [u3a.org.uk](http://u3a.org.uk)



## 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

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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

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[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

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### 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

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### 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

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### 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

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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:

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### 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.**

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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.