

From the Chair



Since we met before Christmas we have had meetings at the Landmark. In December we were treated to a great young soprano, Sophie Radley who gave us a selection of songs from the shows, a couple of opera pieces and some Christmas music. A lovely start to our festive season. Our Christmas lunch at the Courtyard was well attended and I apologise for the paper aeroplanes from our table if you were caught when one might have gone off course. But a good time seems to have been had on other tables apart from ours, and it was a good chance to meet members we knew as well as some new people. The Courtyard is normally closed on a Wednesday, but they seem amenable to making a good case for hosting our group.

We kicked off the New Year with one of Bill and Mary's great quizzes. The result was very close: only one point between the first three teams. Our table had a particularly good number of quizzers and got the edge, much to my surprise. It wasn't fixed, Promise.

Paulin will be telling you more about the recent talks and the quiz coming soon. One of our members, John, is hosting the quiz at Sholden Village Hall on Saturday 8 February at 7pm. This is a new venture for us: having an event in the evening, and also at a weekend.

We also found that for our new members, Saturday proved to be a good time for a meeting in Walmer Education Centre. We braved the cold and found the venue so warm that we had to remove coats and thicker jumpers. It was a good chance for us to explain our committee and purpose and get to know one another. The event also proved fruitful for gaining some more helpers. The Volunteers' meeting at the Royal also added to our number. So far, we haven't had anyone volunteering to replace our Group Co-ordinator, so if you are interested, please contact us via the website. There are several new groups being considered. Although people sometimes believe that groups are always full, please have a look and see if something appeals, and we will happily support you if you would like a group and might act as its leader. It's much easier than it sounds, and you don't have to be an expert. We can learn new things together.

We repeat our invitation to any members who might like to come and see us at one of our committee meetings usually the second Friday of each month at Golf Road Centre from 10-12. We have a good chance to discuss our upcoming events, and plan ahead as well as the formalities of reviewing our finances and having feedback from each of the members about what has happened and what is planned. Your views are welcome.

January is often a difficult month: the festive season is over, and the days are only slowly getting longer, with storms and cold weather, but we have groups and events happening to cheer us till the spring comes.

Best wishes, Sue

Sue Edwards

Groups Update

Are you looking for a space in an interest group? This is what we have available:

Existing free groups with spaces	Existing charged groups with spaces	New groups
Art appreciation	Discussion Group	Classical Greek Drama
Book group 1	Drawing for all	Practical Gardening
Book group 3	Dust your school uniform off	Chanson Francaises after Easter
Bridge Network	French Intermediate	
Canasta	Understanding your body	
	Women in Society and History Dover	
Chess group		
Climate Matters		
Deal Lunch Group		
Easy Short Walks		
Filmgoers		
Gentle Explorers		
German Intermediate		
German Kaffeepause		
Lunch Club		
Rummikub		
The One o'clock lunch club		
WhatsApp social group		

Check out the details on our website <https://wcc.u3asite.uk/groups/>

Coming soon: a singing group, the road to authoritarianism and others. Information will come out as soon as details are agreed.

Huge thanks go to all our group leaders, who offer so much to the rest of us. I am constantly amazed at what talented people we have in our u3a.

Anyone wishing to start a new group, please contact Eleanor.brooks1661@gmail.com , our acting group coordinator. If you think you could help Eleanor in supporting members who are struggling with Beacon, booking rooms for groups, or supporting new group leaders, please also get in touch.

Men's shed.

Did you know that our u3a only has 25% men? The committee turned its thoughts towards whether we are putting on enough activities that appeal to men. In most cases what appeals to men may well appeal to women too so could just be that we need better across the board activities.

One idea that was mentioned to us was Men's Shed which is a national organisation (website <https://menssheds.org.uk/sheds>) that meets in all sorts of places, including sheds, offices or garages (there is even one in a disused mortuary) to do DIY projects with tools that would look familiar to those who studied woodwork or metalwork. They vary in what they do and how they do it, but they all provide a place for particularly, but not exclusively, men to get together, to share an interest, have fun and make friends. Some help the local community for example if a school or charity needs something repaired or built. Many "shedders" start informally before finding premises

Do you think there is a place in our u3a for a men's shed? If this attracts your attention, have a look at their website for ideas and talk to our groups coordinator, currently Eleanor.brooks1661@gmail.com.

Are there other ways that you think we can engage more men? Would it help to have more men on the committee? We don't want to set up activities that exclude anyone, but we do want to offer things that appeal to all our members over the year. Let us know your thoughts.

Eleanor Brooks

Membership

White Cliffs Country u3a flyers have been kindly created by member Carol Fowler. 250 have been printed and distributed to members who have offered to place them in their local surgeries, churches, village notice boards, grocery stores, cafes, etc. Keep a look out for them. We're getting the word out about our fabulous u3a.

Several local parish and village magazines have published an article about our u3a, gratis, so keep a look out for these. So far, Church and Village (Ickham, Littlebourne, Stodmarsh, Wickhambreaux, Bramling), Eastry Village News, The Sandwich Times, Temple Ewell News, Walmer & Cornilo Parish churches, and The Compass (Greater Mongham and Upper Deal). If I've missed anyone's local magazine or newsletter, please do let me know, and I will contact their editor.

Several village and parish newsletters have place out ad, also created by Carol Fowler, in their newsletters and on their Facebook pages.

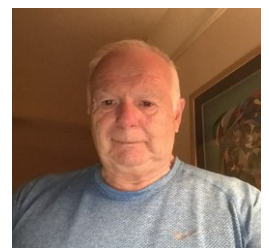
Friendly reminder that annual membership renewal in 2025 will start 1 May, no longer 1 April as it has been in the past. The renewal in 2025 will go down to £ 10 per annum. If someone joins after 1 February 2025, their membership runs through 1 May 2026. So, this is a great opportunity for new members to get the most out of their membership dues, and to encourage your friends and family to join. Bill, Mary, and their IT team will offer IT sessions on how to renew online, should you feel you need assistance.

Our last New Members meeting, on 11 January, at Walmer Castle's education centre was well attended. Welcome new members. We're glad you've decided to join us,

Our next New Members meeting is at the Riverside Centre, Dover, on Thursday, 8 May, 2025, between 3 - 4 pm. If you're a new member and haven't been able to join us for a past new member's meeting, please do come along in May. Committee members and Group leaders attend as well, so there are opportunities to ask questions and to learn more about your u3a. But please do RSVP. Thank you.

In the November 2024 Update for u3as, the Third Age Trust office expressed a desire to understand the impact their national advertising has done on membership enquiries. They requested individual u3as ask new members how they learned about u3a. Bill Venables, one of the IT supports for our u3a, has devised a questionnaire for new members, which he has attached to the Welcome email which new members receive. I'll pass the results on to TAT. These results will, in addition, be helpful for marketing our u3a.

Quiz Master and new Member John Andrews has generously offered to MC evening Quizzes for our members. He's done loads of these in the past, and a good time was had by all. His first one will be on Saturday, 8 February 2025. Sholden Village Hall. Doors open at 6:30 pm, with the quiz starting at 7 pm. There is lots of off street/ street parking. Tea, coffee, and nibbles are included. Teams can bring own drinks or food, glasses are available. John will have a St. Valentine theme on one round. No need to come as a team, just sit anywhere.



Ali Robertson was the winner of the free HP laptop draw. Congratulations Ali.

Ponda Thomas



Talks and Socials

TALKS, ANYONE?

When I joined our u3a I had this vision of myself in lazy retirement, perhaps ambling along to the odd talk or two to stave off impending old age... Instead, before I knew it, I found myself not just joining the Committee but rather to my surprise taking on the role of Talks organiser AND having a lot of fun in the process. Getting to know my fellow Committee members and making lovely new friends has been a real bonus.

But in September I shall be stepping down after three years, and it will be a good opportunity for others to bring some fresh ideas to the role. You would need to enjoy writing and communicating, be reasonably organised and have some basic computing skills – although there's always someone to help if you get stuck. Above all, you would get plenty of guidance learning the ropes. I'd be happy to give you a bit more of an idea what is involved, so please do email me on:

wccu3ameier@gmail.com

Paulin Meier
Talks

Third Age Trust (TAT) News and on-line learning events

There are many events each week on TAT's website that you can join on line from this page
<https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events>

Some of the many they are offering this week are:-

The Human Brain,
An Introduction to Cryptic Crosswords,
Sociology, Equality and Feminism
Penguins of Antarctica.

Mary Venables
IT, Website and Newsletter

Web and IT News

We, along with many other u3as continue to push the Third Age Trust (TAT) about improvements to Beacon and the need for a new payment platform. There have been many changes in the organisation, staff, and volunteers up there, so we are waiting expectantly to see what happens next.

We are hoping to start the IT drop-in sessions again soon and are in the process of liaising with the Golf Road Centre over available dates. We will try and rotate the days each month to make it easier for people who have other commitments.

We have been asked by quite a few members if we could run IT classes, but sadly neither of us are teachers, however we have been investigating some videos on You-tube which we may be able to run as a course. We will send an email around letting people know when we have found something that might be suitable.

Bill Venables
IT and Website

Groups News

Dotty the Scarecrow



White Cliffs u3a participated in the Scarecrow Trail competition at Walmer Castle in November. We are very pleased to say that our effort "Dotty" won first prize in the Adults Favourite and the Children's favourite categories.

The other places were awarded as follows:-

Overall, second: 'The Disco Dignitary' by Midlife Movers

Overall, third: 'Sally Swimmer' by St Martin's WI

Most Liked Online: 'Dinner Man John' by Temple Ewell Primary School

Managers Favourite: 'Sally Swimmer' by St Martin's WI

Top Conversation Starter: 'Eco Warrior' by Bright Sparks Pre-School

Very well done to the Scarecrow Team and other volunteers who helped make Dotty a reality.

Mary Venables

Climate Matters Group

This group provides a chance to learn about all things climate and understand more about the problems and the solutions we all face. It covers topics such as food, energy, transport, clothing, ethical choices and how to avoid waste and what we can do. They share good ideas and information to help us make informed choices.

This week they were looking at alternative modes of transport and discussed the many different options available from walking and cycling to hydrogen power.

They also looked at ways in which we could all do our bit by looking at how often we get meals delivered and grouping on-line shopping orders.

The Group still have places so for further information please contact the group co-ordinator Eleanor Brooks Who is also the Climate Matters Group leader.

Christmas Craft Group

Nine members met up to enjoy some Christmas themed crafting on two dates in November. The group was led by Anne Matthews, who is a very talented sewer and crafter. At the first meeting we made a small Christmas decoration, which involved the technique of English paper piecing. Everyone seemed to enjoy working on their decoration and not much chatter was to be heard as we were all concentrating so much. We didn't manage to finish our decorations but were given full written instructions so that we could complete it at home or finish it at the following week's meeting.

At the second meeting we made a Christmas card, from small squares of fabric, which involved a lot of ironing, some sticking, but very little sewing.

The sessions were enjoyed by all and hopefully a similar group will run again this year. After all, at the time of writing this we are only 353 days 10 hours and 16 minutes away from next Christmas.



Judith Oakley
Group Member

The Creative Writing Group

Bryan Pedersen a member of the group writes:-

I am a member of the creative writing group, and they've been there letting me understand what is good and gently letting me know what is not so good about the poetry that I write. Mike Burney Cumming, the leader of the group has taught me about structure in poetry, which it must be said took some drilling to get me to finally understand. The creative writing group is full of people who in my opinion are talented people from most walks of life. Some from surprising occupations, but all are friendly and helpful. I've learnt more about the English language in my time with this creative writing group than I did in my final years at school.

Creative writing has two important elements creative thinking and creative writing. In the group they try to cover both the technicalities and the fun of writing. Having fun is a key ingredient of the group experience and the group provides you with a structure that encourages you to actually sit down and write rather than just think about writing.

Here is a poem written by Bryan :-

PLEASE LEAVE QUIETLY.

Please, leave quietly.
Don't feel you need to make a show.
Be as silent as a midnight breeze.
Or as silent as a single flake of falling snow.
Leave with the warmth of a goodbye kiss,
And with the silence of a seller of wine
Please leave quietly my friend.
Be as measured as a single tick.
From the eternal passage of Old Father Time.

Please, leave quietly.
Leave with peace deep in your heart.
Leave with fond memories of your stay
Remember us with kindness as you turn from us and then depart.
Be as silent as a barn owl's wing.
Be as quiet as the touch of a falling tear.
Please, leave quietly my love
Be as silent, so very silent
As silent, As the bravest soldiers untold fear.

Please, leave quietly
Leave as if you mean to go
Leave because there's nothing more to be said.
Not because there are things that I should still wish to know.
Be as silent as a falling frost
As silent as a field of virgin snow
Please, leave quietly my son.
Be as silent, oh so very silent,
So silent, that even I need never know.

Please, leave quietly.
Be as graceful as a ballroom gown
Be as cutting as an eagle's wing,
But please my love don't make a sound
Be as quiet as the coming of the darkest night.
Be as glorious as the arrival of the brand new day.
Please, leave quietly my Love
Be as quiet, so very quiet
As quiet, as the silent order called to pray.