

May 2025

Chair's Report Spring 2025

SAVED BY THE MEMBERS WHO VOLUNTEERED! WE WILL GO ON....

Since writing to you last winter, we have had some downs (and ups).

On top of the 2 planned retirements from the committee, we learnt of 2 further house moves out of White Cliffs Area. It would have halved the Committee membership and would have left us without a Chair and Secretary by September. Having been without a permanent Group Co-ordinator since last September, things did look rather bleak. We recently learnt that Val Tierney, our Treasurer, is also planning to retire in July.

The good news is that we have had a very pleasing response, and the committee looks like being refreshed with a number of very willing volunteers coming forward. We are likely to be able to continue even stronger than before. We are deeply grateful to our new committee members for rising to the challenge. Many thanks to all of you for recognising the importance of volunteering. It is at the core of our u3a movement to do things "by members, for members" and our pledge when we join to help out where we can. We will introduce the committee members at our AGM if not before. And we will of course very much miss Paulin Meier, talks co-ordinator, Val Tierney, Treasurer, Gill Ashford, Business Secretary, and Eleanor Brooks, Vice Chair, and acting Groups co-ordinator. They have all been unstinting in their commitment to our u3a. We wish them the very best for the next stage in their lives. As many of you already know, Paulin (Talks co-ordinator) and I are coming to the end of our maximum terms of office at the AGM.

It's safe for you to renew your membership if you have been waiting for news.

We have had some changes over the past months to bolster our efforts for the members living in Dover and Whitfield. The Riverside Centre is a good venue for smaller talks, and we have moved these to the mornings so that people can still manage to come when an afternoon session is less convenient. One of our new Committee members, Heather Jackson, is also a volunteer at Maison Dieu (Dover Town Hall) which is about to open after a long period of major renovation, so we hope to include it in a future trip or to see if it could host a meeting there. Heather has also bravely agreed to become our Groups Co-Ordinator (at last!) and has hit the ground running with energy.

Our volunteers are of course at the heart of our u3a. We plan to thank our Group leaders next month with an afternoon tea at the Royal Hotel. For those of you who came to the volunteers' meeting in January, you will already have had a sample of the Royal's cakes! So, if any of you feel that you have a good idea for a new group, would this be an incentive to start one?

Our trips team has gone from strength to strength, and we have already found that the trip to Greenwich was fully booked very quickly, and there's more to come over the summer. I know how much we appreciate a good day out and they have been well supported. Carol, Amanda, and David are leading the various trips.

Bill and Mary have also been doing sterling work to support those of you who find problems with IT. We may also have more to offer there, so watch this space. But there was nobody at the last drop in session. Was this because Easter was coming up and people were busy, or has everyone now found a greater confidence with IT?

Looking more widely outside our own doorstep at the wider u3a movement; The South of England Summer school has started booking up for a 3 day event in the summer where members of all our u3as can have a

deeper dive into a variety of subjects. These study groups are of course all run by volunteers at other u3as, and I can say they are great fun and stimulating even if you are studying something entirely new. They are residential, at the University of Chichester. It's a chance to meet other u3a people and there are sometimes theatre trips and other forms of entertainment which can also be part of this short break. Do have a look at the Third Age Trust website for details.

If you are looking to see what else is on offer there is a good range of online courses and talks available on the Third Age Trust website. I joined about 400 members on a Zoom talk by our own members, Jenny Wall, about the restoration of Richborough Fort and its Roman history a couple of years ago, which inspired us to go over there and have a look round this local site. There are a huge variety of opportunities we can enjoy from the comfort of our own homes.

Lastly, the Kent Network well supported by our own Eleanor Brooks, have masterminded a promotional stand at the Kent County Show. If you are available to volunteer, please let her know. And if you are planning to go, do drop in to say hello to our fellow u3a members, and tell anyone else who is investigating the opportunities what you get from your own membership here.

With very best wishes to you all,

Sue Edwards

Groups News

Hello everyone, my name is Heather Jackson, and I volunteered to support Eleanor and take on the role of groups coordinator from her. Please be patient with us as we change over.

Check out the Group details on the website and on Beacon, the new groups we mentioned last time are up and running now and we are anticipating more.

If you think you could be a group leader and have time even for a few meetings to share your knowledge skills or enthusiasm, please get in touch.

Contact **groupco-ord@wccu3a.co.uk**

Talks & Events

Well, we've had a busy first quarter so far this year with well-attended monthly talks at the Astor, numbers gradually increasing in Dover, and even a couple of Quiz Nights and a coffee morning! We try to keep a mix of topics to interest members (e.g., science, history, arts, local topics) and always appreciate your ideas or suggestions – even if they can't all be accommodated. In fact, speakers have to be booked well ahead (some of them a year in advance!), and we already have a full programme into Spring 2026.

You might even fancy giving a talk yourself – to a smaller group if wished – about a specialist subject: for instance, u3a member Heather Graham will kindly be giving a talk in Dover later this year about her time working at the Dungeness Nuclear Facility.

As always, our events are listed on the White Cliffs Country u3a website, as well as via email, and at the end of May I shall be sending out a calendar of events from June to December to everyone.

Paulin Meier
Committee Member (Talks)

Membership

Our annual membership renewal is well underway, with the renewal date being 1 May rather than 1 April as it has been in the past. Most of the members have renewed, but if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Membership Secretary. Our renewal fee is only £10 per annum now.

If you use Facebook, keep an eye out for our White Cliffs Country u3a flyer. Many of the local villages have kindly agreed to post our flyer on their Facebook page. The Rural Roundup, for Walmer and Cornilo Churches, generously placed our flyer and an article about our u3a in their March edition; see page 46 and page 63. Also, The Lantern, for St. Andrews Church, has graciously placed an article about our u3a in their February issue; see page 14. Thank you to all the volunteer members who helped to distribute and post the 250 printed flyers.

All your efforts to get the word out about our White Cliffs Country u3a has seen an average increase in membership for the first few months of 2025. Typically, we see an average of 7.6 New Members per month (based on the latter 6 months of 2024). But for the first quarter of 2025, when the results of our marketing started to show, an average of 12 New Members per month decided to join us. We welcome these new members and look forward to their enjoying all that u3a offers.

We have decided to have two New Members meetings in May to accommodate all the new Members. The first was on 8 May, Riverside Centre, Dover. And the second is 16 May, Friday, 10:30- 11:30 am at Sholden Village Hall. if you're a New Member and have not been able to make a New Members Meeting yet, please do come along... but RSVP so I can be sure we have enough biscuits!

Our next New Members meeting is at Sholden Village Hall, on Tuesday, 12 August, 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 August. 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.

Alexandra Patrick won the Dell laptop, from the drawing on 14 April. Congratulations Alexandra !

Ponda Thomas

Membership

Third Age Trust News and On-Line Learning

Our u3a national body - the Third Age Trust - looks after all the u3as in the UK, providing educational and administrative support. The Trust is overseen by a Board of Trustees, who are responsible for governance of the Trust, and the u3a Council, an elected body of regional representatives who act as a conduit between the membership and the Board. The Board delegates specific responsibilities to various Committees. They also provide on-line Groups and Events which any member may book and join in.

TAT Main Website is here - <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

From there you may book any of the following:-

- On-line Learning Events. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events#Events>
 - u3a members can access a wide range of free online talks, workshops, and courses through their membership. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organizations.
 - All events are bookable via Eventbrite. and are exclusively for u3a members.
- Interest Groups On-line
 - This offers a variety of peer led, online learning opportunities. It costs £12 to join for the year, and membership runs from 1 April to 31 March of the next year.

Interest Groups on-line can be found here:-

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/interest-groups-online/interest-groups-online-groups>

- Summer Schools <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/summer-schools>
 - u3a summer schools are organised by individual regions and nations, giving you the opportunity to spend a couple of days getting to know other members, learning new things, and exploring topics your u3a might not usually offer. You can find all the summer schools taking place this year on the Summer Schools page, linked above.

TAT have a survey included in their on-line Newsletter asking members how they could improve the magazine, if you have missed it and would like them to hear your thoughts, you'll find a copy here: _

[TAT Newsletter Survey](#)

Mary Venables
Newsletter Editor

Quite a few members have asked about the structure of the u3a organisation as a whole and where individual u3a's fit in. The chart below should help explain this.

THIRD AGE TRUST (T.A.T.)

(National Organisation)

Responsibilities
Legal and governance
Finance
Strategy
Advice
Training

Also Organises
Online groups
Newsletters

U3a COUNCIL

(Regional Organisation)

Has Regional reps who Feedback to and from TAT and u3a's

White Cliffs Country and all other Kent u3a's are members of the Kent Network, who all work together to provide Training and Publicity, and joint events like the County Show.

Each individual u3a has:-

INDIVIDUAL u3a's

Role

Functions

Chair – Officer Role and every u3a should have one.

Strategic Leader, this is where the buck stops locally.

Vice Chair - Officer Role and every u3a should have one.

Provides Support for the Chair

Treasurer - Officer Role and every u3a should have one

Finance
Bank Accounts
Charity Commissioners financial returns

Business Secretary - Officer Role and every u3a should have one

Communications
Minutes
Governance

Membership Secretary

Membership
Marketing

Groups Co-ordinator

Provides support to Group Leaders and members wishing to join groups

IT and Website

Troubleshooting systems,
Build and Maintain Website.
Help members with IT issues relating to membership and joining groups.

Talks

Arrange speakers
Arrange venues
Pay related bills.

Newsletter and IT Support

Helps members with any IT issues and access to Website and Beacon

Welcomers

Meeters and Greeters provide help to new members.

The whole organisation, apart from a few office staff in Head Office, is run by volunteers on the basis that it is run "By Members for Members", everyone at TAT and the Council are unpaid Volunteers who agree to share their time, Knowledge and Skills without charge.

IT and Website

EMAIL AND MESSAGE SCAM WARNING.

A couple of our members have asked us to warn about an Amazon scam in which the sender asks if they are an Amazon Member and if so, could they buy something for them. Sometimes it looks as though you might know the sender, but please ignore this and contact the person directly or by phone if you think they need help.

Bill Venables
IT and Website.

COMPUTERS - A HELPING HAND

Do you need some one-to-one help to sort out computer problems, or do you simply want to find out how to get something done in programs such as spreadsheets, word processing, desktop publishing, email, finding things on the internet?

One of our Members, Joe Wall is willing to come to your home or preferably work through a remote connection and help you to solve problems and/or develop your skills and knowledge.

Joe can arrange a one-to-one appointment with you to which you may bring a friend or partner if you wish. To arrange an appointment simply call Joe on 01304 369903 or 07710 977661
Joe is a member, but he will always carry a U3A photo ID card if he visits your home.

For those who want to undertake self-directed learning here are some useful links to free online training on almost any IT subject:

- <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/>
 - When you get to this site you can click on "Technology" it takes you to another page listing all the Computer Related subjects available to you.