u3a learn, laugh, live

White Cliffs Country

Newsletter Autumn 2026

Serving Deal, Dover and Sandwich









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Welcome from the Chair

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone who attended our Annual General Meeting on 2 September. It was wonderful to see so many members in attendance, both longstanding and new. In addition, thank you for casting your votes for the entire committee of six trustees. We welcome Philip Whiteman as Membership Secretary, who has already run his first New Members' meeting. We also welcome Gus Ege, the Groups Coordinator, who has also been hard at work administering our Interest Groups and announcing additional groups, such as Looking at Language and Table Tennis.



As November is here and early dark nights are upon us, I hope you are able to make the most of the daylight hours and enjoy the wonderful Autumn colours. I do hope some of you managed to visit Walmer Castle Scarecrow Trail and see our entry, Nettlewick the Woodland Gnome. Thanks to those of you who voted for him. Not only do activities like this bring White Cliffs Country u3a (WCCu3a) to a wider audience, but they also show the diversity of what we do to have fun. I would certainly say we learnt a lot in putting him together! See page 4 to find out more about Nettlewick.

Spreading the word, I hope you noticed the publications about our 30th Anniversary Celebration in Sandwich CommunityAd, Deal CommunityAd, Deal Despatch and the online article and interviews on East Kent Mercury Website. We are hoping for more to be published in the u3a South East Region Update newsletter and u3a Matters. Fingers crossed!

Christmas is not far off now and we have two Christmas events this year. "Christmas Celebrations through the Ages", with Christmas treats to enjoy with your coffee or tea, at the Astor theatre on Wednesday 2 December. Our annual Christmas lunch is on Wednesday 16 December at The Courtyard in Deal, as it was so successful last year. I hope you are able to join us for one or both events.

Lastly, a gentle reminder that our website acts as our noticeboard and is updated with news and information regularly so do, please, take a look.

Also, if you would like to volunteer to support our u3a in any way please do get in touch with me or any other committee member.

Merry Christmas to you and yours, and may the forthcoming year be kind to us all!



Learn, Laugh, Live

Carol

Carol Fowler, Chair of White Cliffs Country u3a

AGM 2026 and the committee

Our 2026 AGM was attended by 80 members. The minutes of the previous meeting, the Chair's Report, the Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts, and the Membership Secretary's Report were all accepted. After voting for the committee, there followed a question-and-answer session, chaired by Carol. The draft minutes can be found on the White Cliffs Country u3a (WCCu3a) website.

The meeting was followed by entertainment:

- poetry by Alan Gleave, Brian Peterson, Judith Oakley, Edith Morgan and Heather Jackson and
- songs with audience participation by Kellet Gut Shantymen.



The 2026/27 Committee

The committee names and roles are below, and committee members can be contacted here.

Role	Name
Chair	Carol Fowler
Treasurer	John McCoy
Business Secretary	Denise McCoy
Membership Secretary	Philip Whiteman
Groups Co-ordinator	Gus Ege
Events Co-ordinator	Sara Miller

Membership update

I joined u3a in May 2026 because I wanted to learn a few subjects and activities to feed my desire for lifelong learning. I became a Trustee and Membership Secretary at the AGM in September 2026 and have gradually been picking up the reins with the great help of my predecessor, Ponda Thomas, and the other Trustees.

Since I took over, our membership has grown from 471 to 486 and, according to feedback received at our last two quarterly New Members' meetings, most of our new members hear about us through word of mouth.

If you have friends who may enjoy learning in a relaxed environment, the talks and groups we run are a great way to scratch that learning itch and make new friends. So why not get them to join up!

Our next New Members' meeting will be held on 9 December 2026 at 11.00am in Sholden Village Hall for members who joined after 24 September 2026 (or weren't able to attend the previous meeting). I will be sending invites out closer to the date.

I look forward to meeting you at one of our upcoming events.

Don't forget our public Facebook page called White Cliffs u3a - we would love our members to post pictures of your group or event activities on these pages!

Philip Whiteman, Membership Secretary

Nettlewick our woodland gnome!



Let me introduce you to Nettlewick, this year's WCCu3a entry for Walmer Castle Scarecrow Trail. There were many entries at Walmer Castle to explore, and the competition was open from Saturday 17 October to Sunday 1 November. We were very pleased to hear so many of you visited and voted for Nettlewick!

Walmer Castle grounds and gardens are such a beautiful place to visit, and this year was no different, with wonderful Autumn shades and the fun of the Myths and Legends themed Scarecrow trail.

Our very hard working and creative team this year consisted of Janice Kitson, Ian Harding, Paul Fowler, Julie Framp and Julia Kent, with a little help from me.

Perhaps we should enrol Nettlewick as a WCCu3a new member!?

Carol Fowler, Chair

u3a Short Story competition

The theme for this year's u3a Short Story Competition is 'Out of the Ordinary.' Entry is free and open to all u3a members, and the deadline for submission is 12 noon on Friday 22 January 2027. You can find out more, including the competition rules and how to enter, on the TAT website.

Interest Groups News

Groups News

Four new groups will start soon: Table Tennis, Looking at Language, Volcanoes, and Singing Folk Songs and Carols. They all sound very exciting, so enrol before all the places are gone. We currently have 46 groups, and 25 have spaces. Log in to our Administration System, Beacon, to find out which groups are still available for you to join.

How would you describe the u3a? In one sentence, I would say: “A collection of members brought together by regular group activities”. As the Groups Co-ordinator, what is now evident to me is just how important the groups are to the continuing success of the u3a. It is pleasing that some of our newer members share this viewpoint and have offered to start a group. I would also like to thank all the existing group leaders for the fantastic job they are doing.

As a WCCu3a member and Trustee, I have spoken to many members, all of whom seem to have a wealth of experience that they could bring to u3a by way of a group. If you are considering running a group or would like further information, please contact me; I would love to hear from you. Please don’t be put off by the administrative or technical side as plenty of support and advice is available.

Gus Ege, Groups Co-ordinator

Needle and Natter



- Are you a knitter, crocheter, sewer, or enjoy any kind of portable needlecraft?
- Do you love the relaxing combination of crafting, chatting and spending time with others?
- If so, this new group could be just what you’re looking for!

We meet on the second Monday of each month, from 10.45am to 12.45pm, at Elizabeth House in Walmer.

Bring along your own project to work on. As long as it involves a needle and is portable, you’re very welcome to bring it! This could include knitting, crochet, embroidery, tapestry, cross stich, or needle felting. If you’d like to bring a sewing machine, please speak to me first, as machines must have been PAT tested. Our meetings will be relaxed and informal. We’ll work on our projects, have a chat, and enjoy some refreshments along the way. We’ll have a “show and tell” at each meeting too, although there’s absolutely no obligation to take part.

There isn’t a formal element planned at present, but we will be able to share ideas, offer advice and help each other where we can. We can also decide together whether we would like to work on a “make-along” project or perhaps tackle a special Christmas craft later in the year.

There are still spaces available, and everyone is welcome — men included!

If you’d like to join us, head over to the Beacon Members Portal, or contact me if you have any questions.

We’d love to see you there!

Judith Oakley, Needle and Natter Group Leader

Poems from WCCu3a's poetry group

The Daily Grind

I sit upon your counter
all shiny silver chrome,
a judge, a jury and a king
the Master of this home.

I want to be awoken
by your caffeine-deficient brain
with beeps and hissing splutters
as I roar into life again.

I grind the beans with gusto
like a bike that's revving up
then spit them out into the grounds
they call me "bean to cup."

Tamper me down with a steady hand
and twist my handle tight,
place the cup below the spout
to start the brew just right!

Press the button, say a prayer
watch the timed extraction flow,
coffee aroma fills the air
as your coffee cravings grow.

Warming of the milk is next,
they say, the trickiest part,
lift the wand out a bit too high,
and you'll get a frothy fart.

The battle's won, the cup is full
and the ritual nearly over,
you'll soon be on your dopamine hit –
like a drunken bee in clover!

By Judith Oakley, WCCu3a Member

Goodbye

I sit by your hospital bed
And watch you breathe
And think of the happiness you have given me
I don't want you to leave.

Always full of life
I never saw you rest
But now I watch you sleep
My hand upon your chest.

When I think of the adventures we have been on
The wonderful times we have had
The excitement, the joy the laughter
You always made me glad.

The night we spent outside Victoria Station
When we missed that last train home
Many steam train journeys
The hills we used to roam.

I see you slipping from me
I don't want to say goodbye
I want our journeys to continue
I don't want you to die.

I am standing on the platform
You are getting on the train
You are steaming off to heaven
On the platform I remain.

By Edith Morgan, WCCu3a Member

AI for Everyone

"u3a communities" is a free on-line platform, independent of the Third Age Trust. It hosts many subject based groups, one of which is "AI for Everyone".

There are u3a AI National resources, including newsletters, beginners' advice and information about how to run an AI group. AI News Events are held on Zoom each month.

Find out more by visiting the "AI for Everyone" webpages.

Italiano!

The *Italiono!* group enjoyed a lovely meal out over the summer – in an Italian restaurant, of course!



Talks and Events programme



White Cliffs Country have monthly talks which are free and open to all members. These are held on the first Wednesday afternoon of each month at the Astor Theatre in Deal. It is also hoped to hold talks in the Dover area, as well as occasional quiz sessions, coffee mornings and other events. Below is the programme up to the end of 2026. Look out for updates and additions to the programme on the Events page of the website.

If you have suggestions for talks or would like to give one yourself, please contact Sara, our Talks Coordinator. Don't forget our suggestion box, which is available at the talks.

Sara Miller, Events Co-ordinator

Talks and Events 2026/27

02 Dec 2026	2:00pm	Christmas celebrations through the ages	Astor Theatre
09 Dec 2026	11:00am	New Members' meeting	Sholden Village Hall
16 Dec 2026	12:30pm for 1:00pm	Christmas lunch for members (booking required)	The Courtyard

Free online, talks, workshops and courses

The Third Age Trust (TAT) offers u3a members a wide range of free online talks, workshops and courses. Most sessions are led by fellow members, sharing their expertise, with additional talks from notable speakers and organisations. Events are exclusively for u3a members. You can find out more about these events from the TAT website.

Day Trips Programme 2027 Save the dates!

The Day Trips programme for 2027 will include three day trips. Arrangements are still being made for travel, venues and catering etc. Each day trip will be announced a couple of months ahead via an email "Save the Date" as usual. However, for the time being here are the dates for the 2027 programme, we hope this will avoid clashes with other group events.

- Tuesday 11 May 2027
- Wednesday 14 July 2027
- Thursday 16 September

Carol Fowler, Chair and Day Trips

Your Generosity!

As some of you are aware, we arranged for the Deal Branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL) to have a table in the coffee area at the Astor theatre during our talks afternoon in October and November. This seems to have been a great success, so we have invited RBL back next year.

The Deal Branch Manager has asked me to pass on her thanks as we raised a very impressive £196.00 over the two afternoons. Well done and thank you!



Carol Fowler, Chair

Visit to Eltham Palace



On Thursday 10 September 2026, 42 members of White Cliffs Country u3a enjoyed a day trip to Eltham Palace to see its medieval and early 20 century architecture and history, as well as the beautiful gardens.

Carol Fowler, Chair and Trips Team, welcomed members as they were picked up in Deal, Walmer and Dover and anticipated a "grand day out" (as said Wallace!).

After a coffee in the conservatory, half of the group had a private tour of the house, and the other half had free time to explore the gardens.

The tour of the house took members through the Art Deco curved entrance hall, with its seven-metre glass domed roof, which was used for cocktails and dancing. “The Crown” and “Poirot” have been filmed at Eltham Palace.

Eltham Palace, recorded in the Domesday Book, was once owned by Odo, bishop of Bayeux (of tapestry fame). It was a draw-bridged, moated, royal palace, lived in by many kings and queens. These included Edward II and III and Richard II, who created part of the garden. Henry IV had his Christmases there and 2,000 people came for Christmas with Edward IV! Henry VIII spent much of his childhood there. Visitors included the Byzantine emperor, King John, Geoffrey Chaucer (possibly), Elizabeth I and Charles I.

Stephen and Virginia Cortauld leased the Palace from the Crown in the 1930s and added an ultra-modern house next to the 1470's great hall. They created luxury interiors for their extensive collection of art and furniture and their pet lemur. They entertained royalty and held lavish dinner parties.



The Cortaulds left Eltham after the war and army education units took over. In 1995 English Heritage started restoring the gardens and interiors to their 1930's glamour.

The WCCu3a party enjoyed a two-course tasty lunch with delightful service at The Lord Northbrook pub in nearby Lee before continuing their exploring in the afternoon, when those who had explored the gardens in the morning had a private tour and vice versa.

At the end of the day the party exited through the English Heritage shop before hopping back on the coach for a drive home.

Indeed a "Grand Day Out"!

Joanna Wilsher, WCCu3a member

We are here to learn, laugh and live!

Retirement rewired

Building fulfilling lives beyond full-time work

The Third Age Trust (TAT) has published a report, “Retirement rewired”, based on the results of a survey of members earlier this year which captured their experiences. Their responses show how learning, friendship, activity and contribution help people build fulfilling lives beyond full-time work.

Results were reported on a regional basis, and the results for the South East Region were similar to the national average as shown in the table below:

Indicator	SE results	National average
u3a has improved my life in some way	94%	95%
u3a gives me opportunities to keep learning and stay curious	89%	90%
u3a has expanded my social connections	78%	79%
My sense of wellbeing has improved since joining u3a	77%	77%
u3a has helped me stay mentally and physically active	64%	66%
u3a has reduced my feelings of loneliness and isolation	42%	45%

The findings point to four connected sources of impact:

1. Learning: Keeping curious, sharing knowledge and discovering new interests
2. Connection: Widening friendships and social networks through shared activities
3. Activity: Staying mentally, physically and socially active
4. Purpose: Contributing, organising, leading, helping others and feeling useful.

You can find out more about this report from WCCu3a website. You can also find the full survey methodology and results on the TAT website.

White Cliffs Country u3a in the news!

Our 30th Anniversary Celebration was published in several local news outlets and magazines. Articles appeared in the September Deal CommunityAd Magazine, the Summer/Autumn Sandwich CommunityAd Magazine and the Autumn/Winter Deal Despatch. In addition, three of our members were interviewed following our October talk about what WCCu3a means to them, and we are expecting an article to appear in the Online East Kent Mercury in due course, so look out for this!


White Cliffs Country u3a - 30th anniversary celebration

On 4th August 2026, White Cliffs Country u3a, which covers Deal, Dover, Sandwich and surrounding villages, celebrated its 30th anniversary with a delicious afternoon tea at Walmer and Kingsdown Golf Club.


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Starry 30th anniversary for White Cliffs Country u3a

Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Admiral Sir George Zambellas, and his wife, Lady Amanda Zambellas, were among guests who celebrated 30 years of u3a in the area. One of the largest membership organisations in the UK, u3a brings retired people together to learn and have fun after the world of work. There was certainly a party atmosphere at the August bash in Walmer & Kingsdown Golf Club. Resident caterers, LovetoCater, provided a delicious afternoon tea, while Deal's Lane Bakery made the celebration cake. For more information about White Cliffs Country u3a and its programme of events, visit the website. Membership is just £13 per year. wcc.u3asite.uk

Look out for the article about the interviews with three of our members!

Deal CommunityAd Sandwich CommunityAd Deal Despatch E Kent Mercury

Don’t forget! Short holidays with u3a

The Third Age Trust (TAT) has partnered with UK Holiday Group to offer a programme of short holidays exclusively for u3a members.

u3a getaways are UK based and there is a great variety to choose from, allowing you to explore beautiful houses, coastlines, and seasonal and other activities.

More information of locations, costs and how to book is handled by a dedicated website which can be viewed here.

ABTA bonded, FCS regulated, and licensed by the CAA providing financial security and peace of mind for you as a u3a member

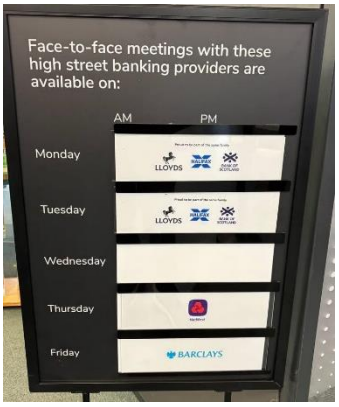
Banking hub in Deal library



Did you know there is now a banking hub in Deal library?

At the time of writing, NatWest and Barclays were already operating from the hub on Thursdays and Fridays respectively and other banks will be coming soon.

Even if your bank does not provide a community banker service at the hub you can still use the hub for some services.



Emergency reporting phone numbers

Here is a list of emergency contact details that may be useful over the winter months if you need to report:

- Fallen trees (Kent Highways) or
- Power cuts (National Grid)

or contact Dover District Council

- DDC (out of hours & emergencies)

Always contact 999 in an emergency



Christmas events

Christmas lunch



Following the successful and enjoyable event last year, the White Cliffs Country u3a Christmas lunch will be on Wednesday 16 December at The Courtyard Restaurant in Deal. Arrival is from 12:30pm for 1:00pm. The dress code is Christmas sweaters or a bit of Christmas dazzle! We have had an excellent response in filling the places and the committee is looking forward to welcoming those attending.

Christmas social with entertainment



Come and join us on 2 December from 2pm for our Christmas social at The Astor. It will be a fantastic opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new people over a cuppa and some festive treats. There will be a fascinating talk on “Christmas Celebrations through the ages”, followed by seasonal entertainment. It promises to be an enjoyable and festive afternoon!

