



Introduction from Iain Cassidy

Dear Friends,

What a July it has been. It was brilliant to meet so many of you at *u3a Festival 26*. Just like members, I got a chance to try new skills – playing Petanque, trying Short Lawn Bowls and listening to fascinating talks. A huge thank you to the incredible volunteer effort that made the Festival possible. The event showcased the member-led ethos that underpins everything we do at u3a.

The in-person Festival was accompanied by *u3a Festival Fringe*, an online programme of events enabling every member to sample the learning and fun of the Festival. We are delighted we had over 4,000 bookings. Thank you to everyone who joined us in person and online.

Ever since I've joined, members have been referring to u3a as the UK's best-kept secret. The last month has been momentous in getting that secret more out there, with multiple national press features. It's wonderful that in the same month that the u3a community has met together, we've also seen it represented in national media.

With very best wishes

Iain Cassidy
CEO of the Third Age Trust

Headline news for u3a

A letter from Iain Cassidy featured in *The Times* last week. He responded to a study showing that a rich cultural life supports healthy ageing. In one part of the letter, he says, "With another rise in the pension age looming, retirement in 2026 looks hugely different from how it did 50 years ago. Rather than fading into the background, our members are front and centre of their communities, learning, laughing and living well."



u3a was also featured in *The Express*, *The Mirror* and *The National* in articles exploring the correlation between friendships and brain health as we age. For Stone u3a member Neil, who is quoted in the article, u3a has enabled him to socialise more than ever. This is thanks to the confidence he developed through leading his u3a Hawaiian canoe group, pictured.

friends impact



u3a Maths expert talks at the House of Lords

Our relationship with the House of Lords developed further this month. Our u3a Subject Adviser for Maths and Stats, David, gave evidence to the House of Lords Numeracy for Life Committee. Using u3a as an example, he highlighted the role that lifelong learning plays in later life and emphasised the importance of

consulting older people in the search for solutions to numeracy issues.

Pictured: A mathematical puzzling workshop at u3a Festival 26.

friends events

u3a week

Our next big event is around the corner with *u3a week* taking place from 19–27 September. This year, our theme is expanding horizons.

We're planning a brilliant line-up of online talks and events, including one with Monty Hall from *HX Expeditions*. We'll also be sharing posts on our social media to inspire you to challenge yourself and do something new for fun.

See ideas on how you and your u3a can take part on [the u3a week page](#).

Upcoming online learning events include *Staying Safe Online*, *The climate crisis and the National Emergency Briefing*, and *Building the world's most advanced airliners*. [See all online events](#).

I was lucky recently to attend the u3a Festival in York. What a brilliant event that was! While there, I met many u3a members from all over the country and attended a Meet the Board and Council session. At that event, the main topic was recruitment.

This is an issue that has concerned the Council over the past year. We are all trying to find the best way to solve it. The Council has a recruitment Task and Finish Group looking at recruitment to u3as and to committees. Lots of good ideas have been suggested but many u3as are still struggling.

Some u3as are bucking the trend and are doing well. We'd love to know their secret so that we can share it with other u3as in the movement. Share your thoughts by emailing me at sue.russell@u3a.org.uk or contacting your local Council Representative.

friends news

from the members

u3a members give gliding a go

Ashbourne u3a has launched a new group for adventurers called Give It A Go, where members will try one-off experiences together. The group got off to a flying start with a gliding trip over the Staffordshire and Derbyshire countryside. Members enjoyed beautiful views and some even had the chance to take the controls for a few moments.



Stubbington u3a learn all about the criminal world

Another unusual group is Stubbington u3a's Criminology group. They discuss topics ranging from the psychology of criminals to the origin of policing and have heard from guests including a prison librarian. The group evidence that whatever sparks your interest, you can find other people to explore it with at u3a.

friends offers



Take a break with the Bard

Learn about the life and legacy of the world's most famous playwright in our *Appreciating Shakespeare* trip, taking place from Monday 12 until Thursday 15 October. A collaboration between u3a and the *UK Holiday Group*, each trip takes the learning and fun of u3a on tour. Find out more on the [u3a Getaways website](https://www.u3a.org.uk/getaways).

Sharing creativity with u3a

Creativity is core to member Nicola's involvement with Wetherby u3a and led her to share her skills at u3a Festival 26. She is pictured, below right, with a new friend she made at the Festival.



I am a great believer in 'creative ageing' because it keeps the mind active, engaged and curious. Creativity, in all its multifaceted forms, sharpens cognitive skills and furthers the ageing brain's ability to change and form new connections.

Everything I'm involved with at u3a taps into creativity in one form or another. When I retired, I joined the play reading group, which I now run, the sewing group, the craft group, the Historic Houses group and the days of interest group. I have made so many friends along the way, indeed, my very best friends were met through u3a.

I have just returned from u3a Festival 26, where I ran five sessions, several of which tapped into my past experience as a television production manager. I also ran a craft workshop where we made macrame dragonfly key rings.

There's something very rewarding about members sharing so many different experiences and interests. The fact that people choose to come along to a specific talk or activity is really gratifying.

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Headline photos: Members enjoying the wide range of activities on offer at *u3a Festival 26* earlier this month.
