u3a friends

October 2026

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Introduction from Iain Cassidy

Dear Friends,

It was wonderful to see so many members come together for our AGM earlier this month, both in person and online. Thank you to everyone who joined us and took part. If you missed it, you can find the presentations and recordings on our website.

I'm also really looking forward to an event we're holding next week at the House of Lords, where we'll be launching a new report - Retirement Rewired. It's an exciting opportunity to raise our profile with external audiences and highlight the impact of learning in later life.

This month's newsletter is full of inspiring examples of what makes u3a so special. From members taking to the waterways at Dene Valley u3a to singing for a good cause in Epsom and Ewell u3a, it's lovely to see the friendships and experiences that bring us together.

We love hearing your stories, so please keep them coming!

With very best wishes

Iain Cassidy
CEO of the Third Age Trust

Headline photo: u3a members attending the Third Age Trust's 2026 AGM.

friends news
from the Trust

Thank you for joining us at the AGM

Our 43rd Annual General Meeting was held last week in Manchester. It was lovely to have so many of you involved. The day was an opportunity to reflect on the strength of the u3a movement as well as looking ahead to the opportunities and challenges facing us.

If you couldn't make it, or would like to revisit anything from the day, you can catch up with the films shown, presentations and a full recording of the AGM at: u3a.org.uk/agm-2026.

friends events

The history of pirate radio

Pirate radio changed the face of broadcasting in the 1960s, breaking the BBC's monopoly and paving the way for the launch of Radio 1 in 1967. But who started the pirate stations, and why were they eventually stopped?

Join us on Friday 30 October at 10am when former pirate radio presenter and Bingham u3a member Nick Bailey will share stories from his time aboard the original pirate ship Radio Caroline.

To book your place please visit the online learning events page on our website.

friends offers

Discover somewhere new with *u3a getaways*

Fancy a change of scenery? Join fellow u3a members on one of our specially designed getaways, combining new experiences, learning and friendship.

Looking ahead to 2027, discover vintage aircraft at Shuttleworth and Duxford in March, learn about wildlife conservation at Dartmoor Zoo in April, or enjoy vineyard tours and expert-led wine tasting in Yorkshire in May.

Each getaway is an opportunity to explore somewhere new and meet u3a members from across the UK. Browse the trips and book your place on the u3a getaways website.

friends news

from Chair of the Board, Allan Walmsley

The last few weeks have been quite busy culminating in the AGM in Manchester on 14 October where the Board successfully supported a final resolution that there would be consultation with u3as if the Trust's marketing efforts were to move beyond its current Vision and Mission.

A new Trustee, Neil Stevenson, was also unveiled, and a number of North West Region u3a members met Trust members at an evening reception. The AGM also included a number a presentations about the work being done within the Trust, and in particular about the relationships between the Trust's constituent parts, i.e. the Board, the Council, and the staff and volunteers.

As we move into the winter period, the Board and Council will be looking closely at a number of strategic challenges facing the movement. Since the pandemic, 73 u3as have closed, so there will be a renewed focus on how u3as can be better supported.

friends news

from the members

Singing for a good cause



Epsom and Ewell u3a's Singing for Pleasure group recently brought music and smiles to the Sunnybank Trust, a charity supporting adults with learning disabilities across Surrey.

Accompanied by the Vintage Band, 26 members performed 14 songs, with a little unexpected help from an audience member called Joe.

After asking if he could conduct the singers, Joe soon became Master of Ceremonies, enthusiastically introducing each song with, "1, 2, 3, are you ready girls and boys?"

Group leader Jenny Sparrow says, "It was really humbling to watch this unfold and see Joe shining and really enjoying his role. Those memories will live with us all for some time to come."

Making waves at Dene Valley u3a

After enjoying a free taster trip on a narrowboat, Dene Valley u3a member Peter Davies was inspired to start a group of his own. Since their first trip in October 2024, the group has been taking to the waterways every two months throughout the summer. Members spend around three hours cruising along a river or canal, navigating the boat and working the locks, before stopping for a pub lunch and heading back.

Peter says, "Many of the people who come with me are quite experienced boatmen and women keen to relive their time on boats. They're a great bunch. Best is being out on the water in the fresh air with a good pub lunch."

friends features

Bringing the community together for u3a Week



This month, we hear how Chandler's Ford and Chinnor & District u3as brought their local communities together during u3a Week.

Chandler's Ford u3a joined forces with neighbouring Monks Brook u3a at Eastleigh Borough's Community Showcase. As well as introducing visitors to u3a, members spoke with local organisations about opportunities to support people with limited mobility and explore new fitness and wellbeing activities.

The following day, ten Chandler's Ford u3a members donned their high-vis jackets and headed out for a litter pick around local shopping and leisure areas. Chair Dave Claxton says the group received lovely comments from residents and businesses along the way. It was such a positive experience that they may even make it a regular activity!

Meanwhile, Chinnor & District u3a hosted a Living Well Fayre, welcoming more than 75 people to Chinnor Village Centre. Open to the wider community, the event offered opportunities to try activities including yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates and new age kurling, alongside talks on health and wellbeing.

The fayre also introduced around ten new members to u3a, and Chair Annette Dearmun is already planning to repeat the experience in the spring.

Both events showed how u3a Week can be an opportunity to bring people together, build new connections and make a positive difference in the local community.

Pictured: Members of Monks Brook and Chandler's Ford u3a at the Community Showcase. From left: Harry, Ray, Paul, Pam, Dave and Mike.

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