



September 2025

## From the Editor

Now that our long hot summer has drawn to an end, people's thoughts might be turning to indoor activities for the autumn. There are several groups in our u3a which fit the bill and new ones are emerging all of the time, so if you are thinking of taking up a new pastime please have a look at what is going on in this newsletter and on our website at [winchcombe.u3asite.uk](http://winchcombe.u3asite.uk).

In the last newsletter I asked you for contributions that might be of interest whether they were directly related to the u3a or not. The committee is now considering whether we can include items which advertise events that are not u3a related as this might contravene the Data Protection Act. So, until this issue is resolved, I'm afraid I cannot include non-u3a related items.

*Martin Blackwell – Newsletter Editor*

## From our Chair

Sitting inside looking at the rain which has at last arrived made me think how lucky Winchcombe was on Bank Holiday Monday. The County Show was held on the last really hot day of the summer and was very well attended. Our stand out gazebo attracted lots

of visitors and it was great to see so many of you there. Thank you to all who helped, especially to Lynne who organised it all.

The next happening for 40 members will be the second u3a holiday. This year Di has organised a trip to Kent with a very full programme of visits. There is no main meeting in September so the next meeting will be on October 14th when the topic is "Medical detection dogs".

We are planning a new social event in November for you. In previous years we have had evening events with music, dancing and supper. Some members are reluctant to turn out in the evenings, so this year we are organising an afternoon film show followed by a cream tea. Details will be announced later. After that we will be thinking about winter and our special December meeting which Karen and Brian have planned for us.

U3a is a self-help organisation and we need support from all members to keep it existing. Personal recommendation does work but we find that a lot of people have never heard of u3a, so the committee have decided that we need to make ourselves better known in the area. Lynette Hurley has taken over the task of

publicity officer and, with Brian Hayward, has produced an advertisement. Look out for this in local publications.

I look forward to meeting many of you during the year and please forgive me if I cannot recall your name.

*Jean Jones - Chair*



A hot, late summer day at the Winchcombe Country Show brought out the crowds on Bank Holiday Monday, to enjoy the stands and entertainment. Our u3a, as usual, set up camp with our tent to promote our activities, to sell a wonderful array of donated books and plants from our members, and to recruit new members to our ranks.

In all respects, we were very successful, raising more money. Thanks to everyone who helped to make the event a success, whether it be our volunteers on the day, or those who generously donated goods for us to sell.

Here's to next year. Thanks to all, from the Committee.

## Monthly Meetings

All take place at Abbeyfields Community Centre

4th October 2025 2:00 pm

[Medical Detection Dogs](#)

The speaker at this meeting will be Linda Wilcox (note: there will be a dog present).

1st November 2025 3:00 pm

[Film with afternoon cream tea](#)

Contact Jean Jones.

11<sup>th</sup> November 2025 2:00 pm

[It's Your Funeral – the Life of a Celebrant](#)

The speaker will be Graham Hutton.

9th December 2025 2:00 pm

[Musical Satire of the 20th Century](#)

The speaker will be Peter Gill who will get us into the Christmas mood!

## Trips Out

### Future Trips

Trips continue to be very popular so if you wish to go on any, please register your interest with Di. You will, of course, need to pay to guarantee a place. If paying by Bacs our bank account details are:

Winchcombe u3a

Payment reference: *Your Name + trip*

Sort code 30-90-92 Account 34740368

Or send a cheque to Di Smith,  
5 The Halt Close, Becketts Lane, Greet  
GL54 5RN with trip name on the back.  
Any questions please email Di at  
[dcsmith18@gmail.com](mailto:dcsmith18@gmail.com).

## Coming Soon...

**Bristol City Centre - October 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Gloucester Cathedral and Nature in Art,  
Twigworth - November 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Worcester Victorian Fayre – December 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Matinee performance of Fiddler on the Roof  
at the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham –  
December 23<sup>rd</sup>**

## Trips for 2026

Jan	14 <sup>th</sup>	Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery	£28
Feb	25 <sup>th</sup>	Harvington Hall (Elizabethan Manor)	£18
Mar	19 <sup>th</sup>	Charlecote Park (NT) & Chastleton House (NT)	£15
Apr	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Day trip to Ludlow	£18
May	7 <sup>th</sup>	Spring Show Malvern	£47.50
June	10 <sup>th</sup>	Birmingham Botanical Gardens	£26
July	15 <sup>th</sup>	Dyrham Park	£18
Aug	6 <sup>th</sup>	Stanway House (Thursday pm)	£15
Sep	16 <sup>th</sup>	Hattlebury Castle	£26
Oct	8 <sup>th</sup>	Moseley Old Hall (17 <sup>th</sup> century farmhouse of Charles II)	£20
Nov	13 <sup>th</sup>	Warwick Castle	£28
Dec	Tbc	Worcester Victorian Fayre	£12

## Our Kentish Jaunt – September 2025

Another successful trip for a coach load of members. Five days in which to see some of the castles and gardens that Kent has to offer. We stayed in the Holiday Inn at Rochester and our faithful coach driver Lee, ferried us through traffic jams and road works to the various destinations.

Our first stop was Chartwell, the home of Winston Churchill

The following day we had a river cruise on the Medway, in glorious sunshine.



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**The food in the Holiday Inn was very variable but the company was convivial.**



**The gardens at Leeds castle were very splendid**



**Hever Castle was where Anne Bolyne spent her childhood years**

## Reflections

*To Kent we went a merry band  
Exploring castles, sea and land  
At Chartwell first, with gardens grand,  
Was there that Maureen could hardly stand.*

*But Monday night brought some despair  
No room at the Inn for Jean, our Chair.  
Still laughter kept the mood alight  
Adventure starts with such a plight.*

*On Tuesday's cruise down Medway tide  
Then Leeds Castle, a jewel indeed.  
But breakfast began with a surprising scene  
As Jean hit the floor where her chair had been*

*Wednesday led us to Canterbury's spire  
And Whitstable's oysters that all admire.  
At base a shortage of pies for all  
And poor Nick suffered a nasty fall*

*On Thursday we strolled through Sissinghurst blooms  
Then Hever's great castle with Tudor rooms  
Food order restored with food and wine  
Profiteroles too-simply divine!*

*By Friday Hughenden closed the tale  
Where Disraeli's story still prevails.  
Lee, our driver so steady and sound  
Brought us home safely from Kentish ground.*

*From castle, cruises and gardens bright  
Through laughter, spills and shared delight  
We'll not forget this Kentish spree  
And think about Diana's knee.  
From Chartwell's charm to Whitstable sea,  
Maybe Norfolk next year is the place we'll be.*

*Jean Jones*

## U3A Trip to St Fagans National Museum of History June 2025

Meeting in the Library car park for the coach at 9am, this journey was partly relieved for me by going over the M4 Severn Bridge for the first time. On entering the modern reception building at St Fagans, I collected the essential map at reception which proved helpful in deciding my priorities. My plan took me first to the reconstructed Iron Age roundhouses and then on to St. Teilo's Church which appears as it might have done in about 1530, the wall paintings being replicas of the originals. Moving on, I passed an information board commemorating the site of the Battle of St. Fagans in 1648. There was not enough time to visit everything although the Gwalia Stores looked particularly interesting. I had just enough time to visit the Italian Gardens, on the way passing an impressive overhead obstacle course and then had a brief look in to St Fagans Castle. There are various galleries in the main building which I didn't see and I concluded that another visit sometime in the future would be required.



*Roger Philpott*

## Remembrance Day

We have had a request from the Coventry Building Society for knitted poppies to display in their window for Remembrance Day. If anyone wants to produce these (there are patterns available on the internet or from Liz Stranks at [lizstranks60@gmail.com](mailto:lizstranks60@gmail.com)) I am sure all contributions will be welcome.

## News from the Groups

### Groups Coordinator

After a long sunny summer and a break in our Monthly meetings, October feels like the start of our 'Academic Year'! With the nights drawing in also, many of us might be considering a new challenge to get us through the winter months.

Details of all our existing Groups can be found on our website here:

<https://winchcombe.u3asite.uk/groups/>

However it would be great to start some new



groups for the benefit of our members and our community. So do you have a hobby, interest, or knowledge that you could share with others? Or have you seen a group offered at another local u3a that you think would be good to start locally?

If the answer is YES, then please send me a quick email outlining your idea to: [groupscoordinator@winchcombeu3a.org.uk](mailto:groupscoordinator@winchcombeu3a.org.uk).

I can then advertise the proposed new group via email to all members and have a sign up sheet at our next general meeting to gauge interest. There's no need for specific details at this stage as if there is enough interest, we can arrange an initial informal get-together to discuss the feasibility and practicalities. These include where, when and who would be willing to lead! This format worked well when our u3a first began in 2017. We now have nearly 350 members, so it is very likely that you will gain interest!

It might take a while for people to come forward – so keep chatting to everyone you know, even if they are not yet a u3a member, as word of mouth is the best form of advertising.

Once enough people are interested in a proposed group, the group co-ordinator can help organise an initial meeting for everyone to discuss the way forward. We are lucky to have a network of over seventy u3a national subject advisers, whose role is to provide subject advice. This includes the setting up of a group in their particular speciality and the sustainability and development of existing groups.

I look forward to assisting the formation of more groups over the next few months – so watch out for details via email and sign-up sheets and if there is there is nothing that captures your interest – then send in your own ideas!

*Jenny Mackelworth*

*Groups Coordinator*

## **AMBLING**

Ambling is not rambling or a route march, but gentle walking for those who still enjoy a walk, but through age or health reasons, can no longer join the more serious walking groups. Our criteria for a walk is: no stiles, no steep inclines, a distance of three miles or thereabouts, and where feasible, no mud. We also like to include the option of lunch and perhaps something of interest for people to look at.

We meet once a month, generally on a Thursday as this does not seem to clash with other groups. We meet in the Library car park at 10.30am so that we may organise car sharing for any non drivers or those who do not wish to drive.

If you would like to join one of our walks, we would love to see you.

Details of the next amble will be published on the website in due course.

*Auriel Hoare*

## **CHESS GROUP**

Would you like to learn chess? Or did you play chess in the past and would like to have another go?

Well, the Chess Group is for you. None of us in the group are experts and some are still learning. We just enjoy playing chess and helping each other to improve.

Like all games there are things to learn, experience of how to play certain positions, tactics and so on. This is where we join together to get an idea of how to play out next games.

Sometimes the group look at games which have been put onto chess websites, learn about openings and endgames and have a go at chess puzzles. Maybe even look at a game played by a grandmaster, with notes of course by an expert so it is easy to understand.

Maybe you are interested in puzzles so here is an example of a puzzle – White to move and win with checkmate.



If you can solve it, well done! Maybe you can show us! If not, maybe the group can help. Either way, why not come along to a meeting. The Group meets on Monday afternoons on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month in the Meeting Room at the Abbey Fields Centre.

Everyone is welcome, no matter what level you are at.

*Nigel Sharp*

## TABLE TENNIS

In mid-August we treated ourselves to some time off playing and had a delightful bring and share buffet lunch in Jacky Smith's lovely new garden. Unfortunately we all enjoyed it so much that nobody thought of taking a photograph! We still have room for previous players who might want to pick up a bat again.

*Martin Blackwell*

## FRENCH

There are three French groups, French, French Conversation and Causez en Francais. The aim of all groups is to improve our ability to converse in French and we do not teach French. The groups have to be small to enable everyone to have a chance to speak. There are seldom vacancies. However people do move away so if you would like to join one of the groups do contact either Jean or Maureen to find out the possibilities or to go on a waiting list.

*Jean Jones*

## GOOD COMPANIONS

The Good Companions Group is flourishing. As well as a regular monthly coffee morning, we arrange various other events. We have recently instituted a monthly lunch, and over the past few months we have visited most of the local hostelrys, and are now looking at moving a little further afield. Other activities take place from time to time, when small groups of us have attended concerts in Tewesbury Abbey and events at the Isbourne Arts Centre as well as visiting the Rococo Gardens at Painswick and some National Trust properties. A group of us recently joined the members of the Evesham u3a's Classic Cinema group at the Regal for a showing of Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*. We welcome new members, so do come and join us for coffee at the Old Bakery on the first Friday each month. We meet from 10.30am to chat and discuss future outings or events

*Maureen Ward*

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS

**Summer 2025**

**And what a summer it was!  
How lucky we all were!**

We started with the Cheltenham Promenaders Walking Tour which introduced us to the hidden gems of Cheltenham Town Centre and the history behind the Spa Town.



Next, in glorious sunshine, we headed off for a private tour of Chedworth Roman Villa. We had a wonderful guide who vividly brought to life the site, its residents, and its place in Roman Britain.



And finally, catching the last of the sun, we gathered at Chastleton House for a casual tour, assisted by Paul's potted history and the pick-up notes in the house. We finished with delightful refreshments in the Church, just as the first real rain for weeks began to pour down.





*Sarah McDonald*

## **WRITING FOR FUN**

And, finally, our Writing for Fun group has this offering for you.

### **I will never forget**

George struggled to close the barn door against a wind screaming its February fury and pelting him with horizontally propelled ice particles. He was exhausted and frozen, but his cattle were in the barn and fed and bedded and his sheep in the lower pasture where there was both shelter and food. The chickens had decided on early doors and he had secured them and switched on the electric netting round the run. Ruby and Spike were wet and tired, shaking improbable quantities of water from their coats, and looking to him for food. They had probably run fifty miles today, up and down rough hillside, fighting the wind. It was down to them the sheep were safe and he casually caressed their wet heads, resulting in the ecstatic joy only a working collie gives its handler.

Fighting to keep their feet George and the dogs crossed the yard to the house. They were met by the instant warmth from the Aga and, once lights were on and the curtains closed George towelled the dogs and then stripped naked. His extreme weather clothing had been beaten by the storm and he was wet to his long johns. Dry, he dressed in clothes identical to those he'd taken off but with a few more holes and darned patches, hung up his soaked coat and overtrousers, trousers, sweater, shirt and underwear close to the Aga. Then he fed Ruby and Spike, giving them a little extra to compensate for the exertions of the day. Dogs and man sat close to the Aga in the bliss of being warm and dry. Only once the chill had left him did George make tea, drinking a whole pot while eating bread and cheese and pickles.

He ate in silence, interrupted only by the clatter of refilling the Aga, as he knew from fifty years of experience that this sort of storm would distort the signal to his old and cumbersome radio set. The phone was unlikely to work too, though George expected no calls and planned to make none. His nearest neighbour across the valley would see lights on in the house and know George was in. The power was likely to be interrupted so after eating he checked the storm lanterns and torches that were always in a state of readiness.

George settled into his ancient, creaking and not wholly comfortable armchair with its greasy arms from decades of lanolined shirts and sweaters and began to flick through the last-but-one copy of the local weekly paper, checking auction prices and births and deaths. Some hours later he was woken by the dogs' furious barking and, disorientated and cross he shushed them. Something had broken loose and rattled across the yard, most likely. The wind had not abated and within its howling he

could hear objects banging against each other and the familiar crack of the shed door he had been meaning to fix and hadn't gotten round to.

As he rose, stiff and sore from the day, to top up the Aga hopper, the dogs went wild again. Something had to be wrong: however reluctantly he had to check. Expecting to have to go outside he pulled on still wet boots and waterproof and cautiously opened the door which then flung itself at him, admitting a bundle of humanity covered in snow which fell onto the hallway and began to unravel into a young man. Initially alarmed George quickly realised that this was someone in trouble. He was parchment white and shivering uncontrollably. It took George a while to find his voice as he hadn't spoken to another person for nearly a month, not counting one shopping trip. Then he talked to the young man as he would to a ewe having a difficult lambing and treated him much the same way, only now he was taking off the man's clothes and rubbing him with a towel as he might a new-born lamb.

The only other clothes George had were his auction, funeral and special occasion jacket and trousers, which swamped the skinny young man who was now installed in George's chair drinking the tinned soup George had heated on the Aga. As he warmed up he began to tell George how he had set out for a walk on the moor, had become cold and disorientated and finally completely lost. In response to his effusive thanks for his rescue George grunted "Aye" and little else. Eventually George put the young man in his own bed and settled down in his chair, covered with an old faded eiderdown.

In the morning, after George had cooked him sausages and bread, the young man went on his way. The wind had gone and it was a clear and bright morning. There was snow lying but not deeply. To the last the young man kept thanking George despite getting nothing more than a grunt in reply. George went out to feed first the cattle and then the sheep and chickens. Just a normal day.

A week later the post van crawled up the long approach to George's farm. This was a rare event as George received only the odd bank statement or Defra communication. All that was delivered was a postcard picturing Rievaulx Abbey with, on the back, "George, I will never forget how you saved my life. Thanks. Simon". He propped it on the mantelpiece where it stayed, solitary and slowly curling until, fifteen years later, the farm's new tenants used it to light the Aga.

*If you enjoy reading these short stories (or feel you can write one yourself) then perhaps you might like to come along to the Writing for Fun group. We are a small friendly group where several people will narrate their stories based on a monthly theme. You don't have to write something, nor do you even have to comment on anything; you can just come and have a good listen if you wish.*