



Learn, laugh, live

NEWSLETTER NEW YEAR 2025

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair: Vacancy

Business Secretary: Phil Cook

Treasurer: Simon Beck

Groups Organizer, Website Manager: Chriss Pickles

Membership Secretary: Sarah Hewlett

Newsletter Editor: June Slater

Publicity Officer: Joan Anderson

Valerie Noble – Coffee Socials

Julian Kern - Committee Member

Claire Watkins – Committee Member

Hello Everyone

Happy New Year with WoodspringnU3A

Website

I hope many of you've had a chance to look at our updated Woodspring u3a website. It took a lot of work to set up and manage the changeover, thanks to Chriss Pickles for doing this. If any group leaders have a photo they'd like to be included in their group information please email it to Chriss. Remember, every person in the photo must give their consent to the photo being used.

<https://woodspring.u3asite.uk/>

Membership News

We have had a very successful few months, and we now have 519 members, which is the highest we have ever been – well done everyone for spreading the word. You may recall that 6 months ago I emailed you all, inviting members to help us by checking our annual accounts or by joining our small committee to listen, offer advice and generally give us a broader perspective on how to keep our u3a flourishing. I am delighted to say that our members rose to the challenge! We had several retired accountants step forward, starting with Rob Ainsworth and we are grateful to Rob for checking our annual accounts and signing them off. We also had several members willing to come and join a committee meeting and see what it is all about. I am pleased to say that Valerie Noble has taken on running our Coffee Social events and we have also welcomed Julian Kern and Claire Watkins as regular co-opted committee members. Ann Sykes is also happy to roll up her sleeves and help should we have some specific tasks needing support in the future. We are grateful to all five of you, your fresh insights are most welcome.

Sarah Hewlett,

(Membership Secretary) at s.hewlett103@gmail.com or 01275 876199

Coffee Socials

The coffee socials are continuing to be well attended and are a positive way for potential new members to come along, especially if they are new to the area. The venues will continue to move between the different towns, on different days so as many people can access them as possible. Details of future meetings are available on the Events page of our website



As always, a massive thank you to the volunteers who run these and make everyone feel so welcome.

Coffee Social dates in 2025 for your diary.

27 January 2 to 3.30 at Scotch Horn Leisure Centre in Nailsea.

24 February 10 to 11.30 at the Clevedon Community Centre.

28 March 10 to 11.30 at Wetherspoons in Portishead.

Joan Anderson –
Publicity Officer

Groups Update

We're very fortunate to have started some new groups in the last few months – Cycling, Birdwatching, Walking and the possibility of an Association Croquet group in Nailsea in the Spring, maybe Backgammon and a Discovering Villages group which will cover the local area. All our current groups are listed on the website; just select 'Groups' from the menu bar and follow the instructions to see more detail, some photos and to have access to sending an email to the group leader if you want to join or just make further enquiries. Each group states whether they are open to new members or are full but maintaining a waiting list. We keep this information as up to date as possible, but numbers can change overnight, so do get in touch with a leader for the most up to date vacancy information. In a change from our previous procedure the only way to initially contact a leader is via email on the website. Their email addresses are not published for the sake of privacy.

We have a selection of updates about current groups:

Astronomy Groups

We have vacancies in both Portishead and Nailsea for budding Astronomers and for the sky curious! If you are interested in seeing stars and hearing about stars, U3A Astronomy is for you. No question is out of bounds.

We look at the sun and stars in Australia at our monthly meetings (weather permitting). We are going as a small group to the Planetarium at 'We the Curious' in Bristol in December and will be planning more trips in the future.

Come along and give us a try.

Portishead, Folk Hall *fourth Wednesday at 11:00 am

Nailsea, #65 High St, 10:30 on the Thursday after the fourth Wednesday of the month.

Backgammon

We're hoping to start a Backgammon group. The venue will be at #65 the High Street in Nailsea on a Tuesday. This can be morning or afternoon depending upon how other people feel.

I thought this could be fortnightly, with the first meeting to be agreed

Depending on numbers we may have to share the cost of room hire. Tea and coffee is available.

Attendees are encouraged to bring their own backgammon boards, and beginners will be welcome.

If we have enough attendees, I would expect to run this on a ladder basis. Watching other people play is an excellent guide to tactics and strategy.

Birdwatching

Our inaugural meeting:

The weather forecast was correct. It said that the rain would stop at about 9:30, and it did. 6 people amassed, if that's the right word, on the Esplanade. Some were experienced and some brand new, so after taking the register, I showed them how to 'personalise' their binoculars, some did not know about the dioptre!

The tide was high so no shore birds, so we looked over the lake and identified many birds. We noted that there were only 2 Canada Geese, they flew in later, about 40. Onwards we walked along the prom and up the steps to Battery Point. Because the wind was howling there was nothing on the coast, so we continued in to Eastwood. Very soon we were greeted by 20+ tits, brilliant to see the winter flocks of 4 species. Whilst I was speaking to my birders a female Buzzard flew above us. That was the only raptor seen. Halfway in we had superb views of a juvenile jay, such bright colours. At the end of Eastwood is the Royal Inn where we had a well-deserved coffee/ mulled wine. We returned along the road and after 3 hours we completed our first trip in the dry. We counted 25 species in the thoroughly enjoyable trip.



Bridge (Nailsea)

We always have room for someone with basic Bridge knowledge.

Canasta

Our Canasta group plays every 1st and 3rd Tuesday in Clevedon, with players randomly allocated to tables each session, therefore it is very sociable. We have over 40 regular players in our group, which is now full. However, on some afternoons when regular players are away, we can have a couple of spaces at tables. If you know how to play Canasta and are happy to be offered a game at short notice, then you can join our reserve list - please get in touch.

Creative Writing

The purpose of the Salthouse Writers' Group is to improve the quality of the writing of its members, whatever the genre, via constructive feedback, and to provide guidance on, and share knowledge of, the writing and publishing industries. We offer a supportive and encouraging environment and want our meetings to be friendly and fun. We do have a vacancy at the moment so please get in touch if you're interested.

Curzon Cinema Visits

This group visits the Curzon Cinema occasionally and meets before or after the film in the lounge bar at the cinema for a drink and a chat

Cycling

There is a new cycling group which will start in the Spring. We aim to cycle along low traffic roads, for about 20 miles, stopping for coffee and a chat. Members will hopefully lead rides on days to suit them. New members more than welcome.

Discovering Interesting Women

We are a small friendly group who meet in each other's homes on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 10am. Some recent interesting women we have researched and learnt about are Doris Hatt, (Clevedon artist), Etta Lemon (Bird Conservationist), Ellen Terry (actress), Elizabeth Blackwell (Physician), Clara Schumann (Composer and Pianist) and Andree Peel (French Resistance Heroine, Healer and resident of Long Ashton). As you can, our meetings are very varied. At present we are full but do have a small waiting list.

Discovering Villages

This will be a new group to explore the variety of interesting villages in this area. The group will meet once a month on Thursdays and will run from March to October.

Where possible the group will meet in or near the village for coffee. The leader for the month will then lead a walk round the village, looking at the history, interesting building (usually including the church) and other points of interest.

Lunch and a time for discussion will follow.

All members of the group will need to be prepared to contribute by exploring a village of their choice and making any arrangements including refreshments etc.

Diane, the leader, hopes to be able to arrange a get together for prospective members before the first village visit in March which she will organise

Family History

Our lively and interested group always has vacancies for anyone interested in genealogy at whatever level of experience. We cover a range of subjects such as DNA, social history, understanding documents, 'how to' sessions etc.

We meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month in the morning at the Folk Hall in Portishead

Garden Visits

We're closed for the winter months. We ended the year with a review lunch at The Farmhouse pub in Nailsea. Members who came along were generous with ideas for next year and I look forward to sending out the visits list sometime in the spring. New members are welcome. See website for more details.

Jazz Appreciation

This new group has met a couple of times in the upstairs room at the Riff Corner Bar, Old Street, Clevedon, and will now meet regularly on the last Tuesday of each month at 7 pm, commencing 28th January.

With a first-class sound system, plenty of comfortable chairs and an excellent bar, this is a sociable group with varied presentations from some of its members. These cover the history and development of different styles, illustrated by a selection of both familiar and not so familiar recordings. There is also a library of DVDs that can be borrowed – and discussed.

The room is big enough to accommodate more members, so do get in touch if you'd like to join us to listen, learn and enjoy

Knitting for Charity

We have no vacancies at present. The group started in July this year and meets twice monthly. So far, we have sent twelve blankets and three cardigans to the premature baby unit at Southmead hospital and delivered some trauma teddies to the Avon Fire Service at Weston super Mare, these were all gratefully received. We are currently, at the hospital's request, knitting Christmas hats for the babies. We will continue to liaise with the hospital as to what they require.



Literature

This Group meets on the first Thursday of the month at 65 High Street Nailsea at 2pm.

We are a friendly and sociable group and the books we read are chosen by our members. An example of this year's choices are Lorna Doone by R.D. Blackmore, The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga and Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver.

This year one of our members arranged for the author of a book we were reading to come to visit us, which was most interesting.

We have two lunches a year at the Farmhouse Pub in Nailsea which enable members to get to know each other.

Refreshments are served at each meeting including very nice biscuits!

At the moment there is a short waiting list, but generally speaking I aim to include new members as soon as possible.

Lunch Group 3

We finished the year with a November lunch at Coates House in Nailsea. It was agreed to skip December and meet up again in the New Year. There are spaces for one or two more and contact details are on the website.

Music for Fun

Music for Fun continues to be very popular. It, like most groups, has its regulars, these numbers have really increased with only a handful of occasional attendees. The list is almost full now. We do have

lots of fun and you can see us out and about in Nailsea on 18th December when we will be carol singing in the pubs and restaurants.

Pickleball

Pickleball has gone from strength to strength. The Friday group is now full. The Wednesday group is probably full too, but I will take another couple before opening a waiting list.

Poetry Appreciation

This group is now full but please get in touch if you'd like to join the waiting list

Portishead Book Club

The Portishead Book Club celebrated our second anniversary in November with breakfast before our discussion.

We remain a consistent membership, with the same ten members. Although this is lovely for our group, it does mean we are full and have no vacancies.

This month we each brought a book of our own choice, to discuss with the other members of the group. One of these was selected as our next read in December.

Rummikub

We meet at the Consti, near Clevedon Clock Tower. There is no charge, but players will be expected to buy drinks of some type.

Rummikub is easy to play and pick up for those who have not played before, so we would be pleased to see any new members, whether experienced or new to the game

Science & Technology

There is no need to have a background in science or technology, just a curiosity in general. We have short presentations /discussions on topics of interest or on an individual speciality. We cover recent developments in science and technology and discuss their implications for society and the environment. The prime objective is to help members understand the principles and issues involved. We meet on the 4th Monday afternoon of the month in Clevedon.

The group has vacancies

Sea Shanties

The main point of the group is to get together to have fun singing sea shanties. Sea shanties teach us something about maritime heritage as they all tell a story.

Limited singing talent will not bar membership of the crew, but any reasonably tuneful singers would certainly benefit the rest of us! Reading the dots isn't required.

Musical instrument accompaniment isn't necessary but would be welcome.

If you're interested, please get in touch

Ukulele – Monday Group

If you play just one instrument...

The ukulele is the easiest instrument to play, excluding the triangle. There's a place waiting for you in the Monday group. We meet in Yatton on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month, from 10.00am to 12.00 noon.

I offer a private introductory session before you join, you can borrow one of my ukuleles here if you don't have one yet.

We are a small (for now) friendly, informal group who enjoy playing and singing together – come and see.

Walking Group

A new monthly U3A walking group was launched in October and over 50 people have signed up to be part of the group. The group is targeted at moderate walking, which usually means 3-5 miles per walk with ascent, descent and uneven ground. We also aim to stop for a lunch break at a pub/cafe/tearoom so there is opportunity to fuel up and socialise some more. Initially we are walking in the North Somerset area, but we may venture into other pastures once we are more established.

People in the group are encouraged to lead walks to give variety. There is no set day in the month that we are walking as things are currently evolving to suit the needs of the group members. Our first walk was in October and 13 of us walked from Portishead Marina to Portishead Lake and then along the coast with a lunch break at the Windmill Inn. It was a dry day, and we enjoyed the autumn colours and views over the channel to Wales. After lunch we retraced some of our steps back to Portishead Marina. It was a pleasant walk meeting and chatting with new people. The November Walk is in and around Backwell taking in the Jubilee Stone with views to the Welsh hills and a lunch stop at The Rising Sun, Backwell. In December we are meeting on the 4th at Cadbury Garden Centre, Congresbury for a cuppa. Group members are encouraged to wear Christmas jumpers and/or hats and bring along some festive cheer.

We're busy putting together a programme for 2025. Current walk dates for the diary are Weds 22nd Jan in and around Nailsea with lunch at the Old Farmhouse and Weds 26th Feb from Cadbury Garden Centre, Congresbury.



Some more of our groups that are currently full but maintaining a waiting list:

- Art Studies
- Book Bugs
- French
- Lunch Group 1
- Music - Opera
- Poetry Appreciation
- Quiz
- Spanish
- Ukulele (Thursday Group)

Chriss Pickles – Groups Organiser
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