

AUTUMN 2025

Committee

Julian Kern – Chair
Claire Watkins - Treasurer
Phil Cook – Business Secretary
Sarah Hewlett – Membership Secretary
Chriss Pickles – Groups Organiser, IT Manager (Beacon and Web)
Joan Anderson – Press & Publicity officer
Valerie Noble – Coffee Social Co-ordinator
June Slater – Newsletter Editor

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Member,

I hope you have had a wonderful summer. The days of unrelenting sunshine have now given way to Autumn wind and rain. For those of you now taking some well-earned rest, have a lovely holiday. I mentioned in the last newsletter that the Committee was working on several initiatives. Firstly, our constitution has been revised and updated, and this can be found on our website.

Secondly, Claire our Treasurer has applied to the Charity Commission for Woodspring U3a to secure charity status. This may enable us to claim gift aid on the Woodspring portion of your membership fee if you are a current taxpayer.

The potential for increased funds leads me on to the third initiative which I briefly mentioned last time, Group leaders have been circulated with the rules of the new grant scheme and Groups will have until the end of November to apply for grant funding for suitable projects which meet the aims of our U3a. If you have any ideas or questions about the scheme, please direct them first through your group leader.

Over the next few months, your committee will be agreeing further aims for the current year which includes an early consideration of next year's AGM where we hope to encourage greater involvement and attendance from the membership.

I will share more with you in the next newsletter

Best wishes
Julian

**What do Woodspring u3a Committee Members do?
The role of the Membership Secretary**

I'm Sarah, the membership secretary and I will have had dealings with every single one of you at some point! My role (no great surprises here) is to handle everything to do with membership applications, records and payments. People who are interested in joining generally contact me by clicking on the Membership Secretary button on our website and send me an email. I try to reply

within 24 hours and send an information sheet about what a u3a is, and how we are an organization run by the members themselves, providing special interest groups for people to join. I give them details of the next coffee social event, and I'd like to thank those of you who are so willing to chat to new members at those events! I also attach an application form and details on how to join. Once they join, I confirm they have paid (generally by bank transfer, sometimes by cheque) and create a membership record and number for them on our secure Beacon web-based system, and keep their paper application form on file. I then send a welcome email along with the most recent newsletter. I keep a record of all the payments and liaise with our Treasurer, Claire Watkins, for the end of year accounts.

My busiest period is obviously at renewal time, when from late March each year, I process renewals from around 500 members over the course of about 4 weeks. Over the years I have got more efficient at doing this, but towards the end of April it generally requires the help of some red wine (usually Malbec)! Therefore, when you get my email request to renew, please bear in mind that your prompt replies mean less need for red wine, and that can only be good for my health.

Membership Secretary is a lovely role as I do get to have contact with absolutely every member at some point; I get to create wonderful spreadsheets (well I think they are wonderful!); and the only busy time is a couple of weeks in the spring.

Sarah Hewlett, Membership Secretary

COFFEE SOCIAL DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

September

Wednesday 24th, 10.00 to 11.30. The White Hart Inn, Weston in Gordano.

Roadworks on B3124. If you are driving from Portishead there should be no problem. If these are still ongoing and you are driving from or through Clevedon you will need to follow the detour signs.

October

Friday 24th, 10 to 11.30. The Posset Cup, Wetherspoon's, Portishead.

November

TBC Friday 28th, 2 to 3.30. The Scotch Horn Leisure Centre in Nailsea

December - no coffee social.

Free safety packs

Do you know of anyone who uses a mobility scooter who would like a free safety pack? I am ordering some free packs from SureWise, a mobility scooter insurer. They are running a safety campaign offering packs containing a safe driving booklet and reflective stickers people can use to make their scooters more visible on the road. They have given out 10,000 free packs already through the police, Age UK and a number of other organizations, including other u3a regions.

If you would like a pack for a friend or even for yourself, please just leave me a message with your name and address on my answerphone: Sarah Hewlett 01275 876199, and I will post you one/some once they arrive.

Sarah Hewlett, Membership Secretary

Interest Groups

We are currently running over 50 Interest Groups across all our local regions – you can find out more about them on our website www.woodsring.u3asite.uk. Choose the 'Groups' option on the menu bar; the groups are listed by default in alphabetical order, but you have the option to sort them into location, day of the week and by category. If you want to make enquiries about any of them, select the group name from that opening page and then select the option to 'email the group'. This allows you to send a message to the team leader who will reply to you directly. Please make sure you type in your email address correctly, and maybe also include your phone number, just in case – just helps us be confident we can get in touch! Even if a group is shown as 'full' it's worth enquiring; attendance can change overnight for any number of reasons, and the website information might not reflect this immediately.

Summer is traditionally a quiet time for us, although most of our groups do continue to run. This month can be a good time to ask for a taster session for any group that interests you, since attendance is likely to be lower than usual as people take holidays now that the schools are back and grandparent duties reduced. Even a group marked as 'full' might be able to fit you in for a trial session. We are, however, starting the autumn season with the offer to run a **second Knitting for Charity group**. The first one, run by Brenda, is limited in the numbers it can take and has been full since it started – see Brenda's update below. Susy has offered to organise a second group, to run on Monday afternoons, possibly once or twice a month, at the Osborne Café on Bay Road in Clevedon. There is parking nearby. Contact susybrigden21@gmail.com if you'd like to join or would like more information.

A new venture for us in July was to work with the charity Abilitynet to provide IT education and support to beginners trying to master their smartphones and tablets – a series of 3 sessions which were a mixture of information and hands-on problem-solving with volunteers from the charity. The sessions were well attended and appreciated, so we have a second set ready to go in September. We may be able to continue next year – let me know if you might be interested

Sincere thanks to all the volunteers who put their time and effort into providing these opportunities for everyone else to enjoy; here is a selection of updates:

Association Croquet

A new and pioneering Woodspring u3a Association Croquet Group started in 2025. U3a groups in other areas have offered croquet but it has usually been the Golf Croquet form of the game. The groups have generally been ongoing, and they have often had a separate existence within a croquet club with little interaction with the croquet club members. Play has been almost exclusively social in nature and only once a week.

The Woodspring initiative has been very different from that model. We ran 8-week courses in Association Croquet aimed at absolute beginners. The idea was to introduce Association Croquet, as a competitive sport, to some new players. Over the summer, around 30 people took part in at least one session. Some found that their necks, hips or knees weren't up to playing croquet. Some found that the tactics and rules were too complicated for them. However, quite a few thoroughly enjoyed the experience and found Nailsea Croquet Club to be a welcoming environment. With the extreme weather conditions, many battled bravely with the heat and with lawns that went from slow and green to brown and lightning fast. A few have joined the Croquet Club as full members and we hope that they have found an intriguing and slightly quirky new hobby that will continue to interest them, satisfy their competitive instincts and enable them to make good use of summer weather. What better way could there be to enjoy the light evenings with new friends? We hope to run Beginners' Competitions for the new players and there are handsome trophies to be won.

For those who renew their club membership next year, there will be the chance to play in Club competitions and League matches and a variety of club events.

In 2026, we will repeat the process – and are already taking names for the limited number of places.

The Croquet Club is very grateful to u3a, and to Chriss Pickles in particular, for making all this possible.

Contact kathy@jnwallace.f9.co.uk

Birdwatching

On our last walk 6 of us travelled part of the Strawberry Line at Yatton and saw 21 different species of birds

Contact geoffdavies@live.co.uk

Discovering Villages

This new group has now visited Chew Magna, Winford etc. We meet once a month on Thursday during the summer, so there is just one more meeting before the winter break. We have space for a couple more if anyone would like to join us.

Contact dbknit@blueyonder.co.uk

Family History

The long dark months of winter are the perfect time for pursuing the lives and societies of your ancestors. Come and join the U3A Family History group - there is no waiting list, and you will be made most welcome by this friendly and sociable group.

Contact jdmadill@gmail.com

French and Spanish

Both groups are thriving; the emphasis has changed a little and is moving more towards discussions of general interest to improve conversation skills. In August the Spanish group watched a very interesting video in Spanish on how being bilingual maintains brain health.

Contact Ken on kennethjones7@talktalk.net

Garden Visits

This year's list of visits is almost completed. Thank you to everybody who has been able to share these.

A recent tour of Tyntesfield Kitchen Gardens was thoroughly enjoyed by all who could attend. Ginny and Grete did a fabulous job of showing us around and the weather was perfect.

The next event will be the end of year review lunch. The Westonbirt Arboretum visit has been postponed till 2026 due to the trees changing much earlier this year.

It's possible I'll organise an extra Tyntesfield visit for the pumpkin display and another to see the house Xmas decorations. If I do, it will be at very short notice and people can come along if they are free.

2026 dates and venues will be circulated around Springtime

Contact napf2bc@yahoo.co.uk

Jazz Appreciation

The Jazz Appreciation Group is re-starting after a summer break - the next meetings are 23rd September, and then the first and third Tuesdays of each month (7th and 21st October).

We meet at 65 High Street, Nailsea, from 2 - 4 pm, and new members are very welcome. Rupert has prepared a series of presentations on the way that jazz has developed and diversified over the last hundred years or so, with some familiar, and some not so familiar, examples from his ever-increasing and very comprehensive collection of recordings. Members will also be encouraged to bring along their own favourites, or suggestions, so these can be heard as well, to broaden the experience and add to the discussion. Over the course of the next few months, we aim to add to our members knowledge and enjoyment of jazz in a sociable and informal atmosphere.

Contact mail@rupertscott.co.uk

Knitting for Charity

I recently took up nine blankets, 3 baby's cardigans and 10 hats to Southmead hospital maternity unit. I have attached the thank you email which shows how much our efforts are appreciated.

Dear Brenda

Once again, I am writing to say a big thank you for the beautiful, knitted items you have very kindly donated to our Maternity unit.

It is always so nice to receive a bag of your handy work, the unit & the families in our care really do appreciate your lovely work

Thank you

Nicky & Julie

Contact brendacarson@btinternet.com

Lunch Group 2

Lunch Group 2 would welcome some new members. We usually meet on a Monday or Tuesday, generally in Nailsea because there seem to be few options elsewhere. Not everyone can make every lunch - we all like our holidays! We have some members who are 'singletons' but we are not a singles group, just some people who like to meet up for a nice lunch and a chat approximately once a month. Contact junevslater@live.co.uk

Music for Fun

The singers are busy singing into their hairbrushes and musicians are tuning up and we are all looking forward to returning to 65 High Street, Nailsea after our short summer break.

A very friendly group, who enjoy singing - unfortunately not always in tune! - but we laugh about it and try harder on the next song!

We meet fortnightly, Tuesday afternoons from 2pm until 4pm with a break for a tea or coffee, a biscuit or a piece of cake and a chat.

We have 32 members, and we think we can accommodate another 3. Although it will be a bit of a squash!!

A programme is sent out prior to the session, so members can listen to any songs they may not know – although this is not essential.

Lyrics and chords are projected onto the wall. Sorry, I do not have the black dot music!

Anyone who plays a portable instrument is welcome to bring it along. It is wonderful to see the confidence and ability grow as beginners bring their instruments to this relaxed and non-judgemental group.

Contact wayheymargaret@yahoo.co.uk

Pickleball

The pickleball group is going from strength to strength with 63 members. So many are hooked on the game, they are hiring courts in Clevedon, Portishead and of course at Scotch Horn to play at other times!

We meet at Scotch Horn on Wednesday, 12:00 until 1:00pm and 1:00pm until 2:00pm and Friday, 1:00pm until 2:00pm and 2:00pm until 3:00pm

Every week I put a poll up on our WhatsApp group and people sign up for the most convenient session(s) with a maximum of 16 for each session.

At present, not all sessions are full – there is always someone on holiday or babysitting etc, so I am not closing the register until we have every session booked.

Cost is £2.50 per hour, to pay for the courts and new balls.

What is Pickleball? Well, I'm afraid it can become an obsession. It really is so much fun, especially when you are playing in our lovely group. We have members who are really so good, watch out for them in county matches, to those of us who play as well as we can, but are not worried when we can't quite get to the ball! It keeps us fit, and everyone is kind to the opposition, although, of course they will try to win the point!

It is a cross between table tennis, badminton and tennis.

At present we are preparing for our first group tournament. We have four teams, three of which are of mixed abilities, and one of highfliers! But everyone is in the running to win the trophy! Not all the games are serious – it is for FUN after all.

Contact wayheymargaret@yahoo.co.uk

Poetry

The Poetry Group enjoys a wide variety of poems which we read and discuss taking turns to lead. To give you a few recent examples we have enjoyed Scottish contemporary poets, pre-Shakespeare poets and Neruda.

Contact gayimaxwell@gmail.com

Rummikub

The Rummikub group is well attended but we have room for another couple of members. We don't have a waiting list as such so if you are interested you are very welcome to come along and have a 'taster session'. You must be a member of Woodspring U3a to be able to join us.

We meet at the Consti on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month from 2.30 to 4.30.

Contact redcote@hotmail.co.uk