

## Welcome to the Winter 2025 edition of the Newsletter

Well, we've had some very cold and stormy weather this winter so far, I hope all our members are able to keep warm and safe. At least by the time we get to the end of January, there's only February to get through – and then hopefully we can look forward to March and the Spring emerging.

Let's get even more active as the weather gets better.

Following Frank Davis' appeal in the last Newsletter, there has been quite a bit of interest from some members for new groups:

### Pickleball

After a couple of pilot sessions, this has proved viable to pursue and Frank is busy setting this up as a regular group. See Frank's report below.

*Other possible ideas for groups?*

**Walking Netball** was suggested – also see Frank's report on this.

### Bus pass to anywhere

Group members getting together to go on excursions with their travel cards to various places locally – where you can get there and back within the day, with a coffee or lunch. It would be easy to set up. We just need someone to organise this.

Contact Frank Davis via the website: [wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/contact/](http://wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/contact/)

## In this issue . .

- Pickleball

### Round the Groups:

- Foraging
- French
- Classical Music
- Computers
- Craft
- Creative Writing
- Indoor Games
- A summer stroll
- Walking Group

### Other news and articles:

- Walking Netball
- Lunchtime Live
- Bus Pass Travel
- Age UK
- Forthcoming Events
- Interest Groups list
- Your Committee

## Pickleball

When this was first suggested as a new u3a group, I was unsure. What was this strange sounding game – and could it suit me, an overweight and under-fit older person with few racket skills?

The answer turned out to be yes. It is a fantastic game and can be enjoyed by people of all ages and skill levels! It's a mixture of tennis, badminton, and table tennis, played with a paddle – a cross between a short-handled tennis racket and a table tennis bat – and a plastic ball with holes – on a badminton-sized court but with a net no higher than three feet.

It's easy to learn and doesn't require too much running, as each person's part of the court is only 10 feet by 15 feet, making it accessible for nearly everyone.

Although I still think it's a strange name, after playing a few games I can confirm that I can already see an improvement in my ability, even though I am sure serious players would roll their eyes in despair. As long as you are playing an opponent of a similar standard, you will have a good time.

If you haven't tried it, I would urge you to give it a go. You never know, it could be something you enjoy and at our age, that cannot be a bad thing.

If you'd like to give it a go, contact Frank Davis (u3a Coordinator of Groups).



## Round the Groups

### Foraging

Our meetings have somewhat fallen apart over the last two or three months, apart from making some Christmas wreaths.

We hope that the group will be up and running again soon, with a planning meeting on Thursday 27th February at 10am – venue to be decided.

Anyone interested will be welcome.

Josie Turner, (Group Coordinator)



### French

Our group continues to meet regularly on a fortnightly basis. We have a variety of activities and media to help us widen our vocabulary, understand French grammar better and improve our French conversation.

Last year (2024) was very special for our Group because the Olympic Games were held in Paris. While watching the games, whether on the TV or actually in Paris, we became more conscious of how many countries speak French. Bien-dire Initial, our bi-monthly magazine, had already made us aware of this in a series of articles on 'Pays Francophones' which were very interesting.

The pictures and images of France and Paris transmitted during the Games, were superb, informative and inclusive like our 'u3a Club français' (we hope).

Vive La France!

Judith Rose (Group Coordinator)



### Classical Music

The ten\* meetings we had in 2024 were very varied and illustrated the range of music we listen to. We have had afternoons devoted to Overtures and Serenades, as well as to the composers Gabriel Fauré from France and Anders Hillborg from Sweden – still living!

We had a session on music inspired by the great novel Don Quixote, and one exploring the music of the film Carmen Jones and comparing it to the original opera by Georges Bizet. We have listened to excerpts from Richard Wagner's Ring Cycle and tracks from the BBC Music Magazine's winners, and have watched a DVD of a ballet, Le Fille Mal Gardée. And we finished the year with an afternoon mixing Christmas, winter and humour (Tom Lehrer and Victor Borge).

\*It was only a ten-month year because of a shortage of members who are willing and able to give presentations. So new members are always welcome and would not be asked to give a presentation immediately! But when you're ready to do so (and it's the idea that's important), there are members to help you find the music if you don't have it on CD.

John Sheard (Group Coordinator)

### Computer Group

The Computing Group operates as a "drop-in clinic" for any u3a member who needs help, training and advice in connection with computers, tablets, smartphones etc. We work in conjunction with Finchfield & Castlecroft Community Association and we can be found at the "Tractor Shed" at Bantock House on Tuesdays at 10:00am or 2:00pm.

(Phone Frank Lewis at 07777 642896 to ascertain whether the next session is morning or afternoon.)

All u3a members are welcome to take advantage of our service.

Frank Lewis  
(Group Coordinator)





## Craft Group

The craft group continues to meet monthly and to try as many different activities as possible. We have made bird houses from leftover floorboards, jewellery from safety pins and glass beads, fabric baskets and snowmen and tried paper craft quilling.

It's a small group but we all contribute to the choice of activities which take place in our homes.

We will be stretching our imaginations again this year and I am looking forward to summer as outdoor activities – involving cement and wood – are on the horizon.

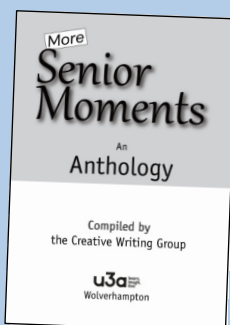
Pauline Cuthbert (Group Coordinator)



## Creative Writing

Thank you to all of you who purchased copies of the "More Senior Moments" writing anthology. We have made a healthy profit from the sales. At our meeting on 13 February we will be presenting a cheque for around £1000 to Compton Hospice; a figure which has made the efforts of our group worthwhile. Thanks to everyone concerned.

We still have a (very few) anthologies left, so please contact us if you would like a copy.



*Members of the Creative Writing Group holding back hordes of frantic customers*

At our January meeting, two former Express & Star journalists (Tim Hamblin and John Nash) came to address us. It was a real treat to hear these two

professionals relate experiences of their working lives in the days when the E&S sold 250,000 copies daily. Who needs Fleet Street when John and Tim's anecdotes recreated earthy scenarios at newspapers in Carlisle, Worcester, Stourbridge, as well as the E&S? Sadly, the days have now passed when the reporters used shorthand and manual typewriters to make their copy.

John and Tim then role-played a press conference in which they were a police detective and an eyewitness to a tragedy during a storm at a canal marina. They answered our probing questions after which we wrote our reports, including strap-lines and head-lines.

A thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, definitely one to savour.

John Ellard (group coordinator)



*John and Tim at our January meeting*

## Walking Netball

Were you once an ace Goal Shooter or possibly a doughty Goal Defence? This may be your chance to revive your past glories or develop new skills.

In an effort to offer more interest groups, we explored the possibility of starting a Walking Netball group. This is a slower-paced version of traditional netball, perfect for those who may not be able to keep up with the standard game due to fitness levels or injury. The main differences are that running and jumping are not allowed, and players can take an extra step with the ball. It's a great way to stay active, make new friends and have fun. Plus, it offers both physical and mental benefits, such as improved fitness, coordination and a sense of community.

During our enquiries, we came across a women's walking netball group run by England Netball and already used by some u3a members. They were a very friendly group and had previously helped us with setting up another of our groups. Rather than setting up a rival group, it was thought better that we direct anyone who is interested to them.

They meet every Wednesday morning: 10 am at Aldersley Stadium.

If you are interested in trying it, why not contact: [west.midlands@englandnetball.co.uk](mailto:west.midlands@englandnetball.co.uk) or simply turn up, have a go and see if it is for you.



## Lunchtime Live!

These are 45-minute recitals given in St. Peter's Church, Wolverhampton every Friday during term time, starting at 1.15pm.

The performers are usually Birmingham Conservatoire students, gaining experience of playing in front of strangers in a strange place.

Attendance is free, although there's a collection plate at the back which is given to the day's performer to cover travelling expenses.

The next performance is by Michael Jones playing piano on February 14th.



## Indoor Games

The group meets on the first Thursday of the month, usually at 1.30pm to play games for a couple of hours. There is no forward planning, other than refreshments. Members are free to bring games that they feel others might enjoy playing. Many of these are gleaned from charity shops, sometimes unused. We choose games to suit number present. Attendance varies dependent on medical appointments, holidays or childcare.

We play a mix of games that cover all sorts of subjects: General Knowledge, observation, words, numbers and sometimes creativity. Please note we do NOT play the modern strategy games. Simpler games mean everyone can pick up the rules quickly and join in.



In December a member – who shall remain nameless – brought 'The Traitors' along; a gift from her son. While a few of us started sorting out all the game pieces, another was tasked with working out the rules from the book of a dozen or so pages.

Let's shorten this account by saying chaos reigned! Okay let's start.

- Task: 'Run around the house and collect objects' – not in my house!
- Task: 'Select a player and say how long you think they could do 'plank' for'.
- They then do it to prove you right or wrong. Don't think that's going to happen.
- We eventually found a few suitable tasks. After a few minutes someone asked, 'How do we score?' Back to rule book.
- Next action, game back in box and a cuppa.

Our meetings involve a lot of laughter.

Last month we played 'Scruples': a game of moral dilemmas. The things we learnt about each other!!!

Sue Stephens (Group Coordinator)

## Bus pass? – will travel

The idea is that group members go on excursions with to a chosen venue using bus passes.

On arrival, members might have coffee or lunch – or discover what else is on offer in the surrounding area.

Interested in organising a new group?

Contact Frank Davis via the website:

[wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/contact/](http://wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/contact/)





## Forthcoming Events and Speakers

25th February **Dr. Shailendra Bhandare**  
The numismatic curator of the Ashmolean Museum gives us a talk on '**A Story of Coins**'. Shailendra Bhandare is Assistant Keeper, South Asian and Far-eastern Numismatics

1st April **AGM**  
As well as the AGM business, there will be a presentation by Coram Beanstalk, a charity which get adults engaged in reading for children.

22<sup>nd</sup> April Paul Wilkins is giving a talk on **Tracing your Family History**, with a view to setting up a u3a group.

Mike and Jo have produced a fascinating and very varied programme for 2025. I'm sure there's something here for everyone. Here is the list:

[wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/events/](http://wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/events/)

If you click on the event title you will see a lot of additional information about the speaker and the topic. This will be regularly updated so please keep checking.



Recently, a couple of committee members met with Wolverhampton Age UK to explore how our two organisations may develop a loose collaboration. The aim of course is to attract new members and also benefit our u3a members for more ways to remain active and ensure wellbeing as we grow older.

Wolverhampton Age UK are pleased to make their clients aware of our u3a activities.

Similarly there are many services which are provided by Wolverhampton Age UK may be a real benefit to some of our members – especially the most vulnerable among us.

Some practical services may be available:

- Handyperson  
Someone who can help with minor maintenance jobs around the home
- Gardening  
Help to keep your garden space under control
- Free home and energy checks  
Helping with advice on getting maximum efficiency from your energy

For more information on what Wolverhampton Age UK can offer, visit:

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/wolverhampton](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/wolverhampton)

Take a look at the 'Daytime Disco'. Penn Bowling Club, third Thursday each month 1–4pm.

## Interest Groups at Wolverhampton u3a

If you are interested in joining a group, please contact the Group Coordinator – see Wolverhampton u3a website:

[wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/groups/](http://wolverhampton.u3asite.uk/groups/)

- Brush up your Shakespeare
- Classical Music
- Computing
- Contemporary History
- Craft
- Creative Writing
- Foraging
- French
- Games-General
- Gardening
- German Improvers
- Jazz
- Latin
- Pickleball
- Play Reading (three groups)
- Poetry (Contemporary)
- Poetry Appreciation
- Reading (three groups)
- Science and Technology
- Self Study Resources
- Spanish Improvers
- Table Tennis
- Ukulele
- Walking

Want to start a new Group?

Contact Frank Davis, Coordinator of Groups:

[fhDavis@gmail.com](mailto:fhDavis@gmail.com)

## Your Committee

Mo Johnson	Vice Chair
Mike Clack	Newsletter Co-Editor and Vice Chair
Mary Warwicker	Secretary
Yvonne Rickard	Treasurer
Michael Clement	Membership Secretary
John Sheard	Beacon Coordinator
Mike Blackshaw	Speakers' Secretary
Margaret Taylor	Committee Member
Jean Brookbanks	Meeter and Greeter
Carol Chapple	Newsletter Co-Editor
Frank Davis	Publicity Officer and Coordinator of Groups

## Learn digital skills with AbilityNet

u3a have partnered with AbilityNet to provide a series of online workshops, exclusively for u3a members, with tips and tricks to help you make your digital devices work better for you. See the full list of talks at: [www.u3a.org.uk/news/learning-news/online-events-with-abilitynet](http://www.u3a.org.uk/news/learning-news/online-events-with-abilitynet)

For the full programme of u3a Online Learning Events, see: [www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events](http://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events)