

u3a friends

August 2024

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Introduction from Sam Mauger

Dear Friends,

As we draw towards the end of August, I am looking ahead to the future.

Within the u3a movement, there is always the opportunity to have our many views and experiences celebrated and heard. **This sense of community and encouraging people to join the movement is part of the character of u3a.** The importance of community has probably never been more important than in recent times. u3a is an example of togetherness; we're a movement that always extends the hand of welcome to whoever wants to join.

Early next month, a team of u3a members will be running in *The Great North Run*, each with their own personal connection to u3a. One of these runners, Ashley, shares his story at the end of this newsletter. **I am wishing each of them the best of luck in their run.**

We are working towards the target of 500,000 members by the end of 2028, as u3as asked us to do, and the possibility of the concept of a council of u3a members providing a guiding light to all we do.

In this issue, Liz Thackray, who is coming towards the end of her term as Chair, shares her thoughts. Liz has worked tirelessly to engage with members, through regional and national on-the-road visits, in online meetings, and by positively engaging with social media.

I wish you all a wonderful end of August and look forward to one final conversation with you in the September issue of the newsletter.

With very best wishes

Sam Mauger

CEO of the Third Age Trust

Cheltenham u3a support Cheltenham Literature Festival

Using a large national grant provided by the Trust, Cheltenham u3a are sponsoring Judi Dench's appearance at *Cheltenham Literature Festival*. A team of u3a volunteers will distribute u3a flyers at the event and answer enquiries from attendees.



As part of their sponsorship, Cheltenham u3a have been able to secure priority booking for u3a members. Priority booking will open on 31 August on the *Cheltenham Festival* website, <https://www.cheltenhamfestivals.org/>. Follow the steps below to make sure you can get access (this is exclusive for u3a members so please don't share this beyond your u3a.)

1. Before booking opens, create an account with *Cheltenham Festivals*.
2. When the booking date opens, log into your account and find the first event you'd like to book on the 'What's On' grid.
3. Select the Book Now option. You will be prompted to enter a promo code. Enter the promo code **LF24U3AC** here and you can then proceed to selecting your seats.
4. Once your promo code has been applied, you can select as many events as you would like and check out as normal.



A large gold medal for Southport u3a's show garden

For the third year running, Southport u3a members were heavily involved in *Southport Flower Show*. This year, they created a show garden, designed by new member Phil and built by a team of u3a members. The garden acknowledged the Flower Show's 100th anniversary by showcasing 100 years of garden design. It was visited by

u3a members from 250 different u3as from across the country – and was well received by the judges too, winning a large gold medal.

Looking back on u3a Festival 24

It was lovely to see so many members participating in activities at our u3a Festival in York. The Festival was championed by Margaret Fiddes, Trustee for Yorkshire and Humber. She says, "I want to say thank you to all the wonderful volunteers and the festival team for coming with us into uncharted territory, and for dedicating so much of their time and energy to the project – we could not have asked for more to make the festival so successful."



Three years ago, I sat in a hotel dining room in Kenilworth listening to Ian McCannah making his farewell remarks to former Trustees, staff and those of us about to join the Board. As he sat down, I suddenly realised that this was it – it was my first task as the new Chair to respond to the toast he had just proposed.

The past three years have had their challenges, their high points and lows. **The best part of the role has been spending time with u3as in all parts of the UK** – apart from the West Midlands. I'm not sure how that got missed, but no doubt my successor as a resident in that region will make up for my absence.

Through meeting u3a members, and often participating in group activities, I have collected many stories that I have been able to share with other u3as. I have learned of the challenges facing some u3as and experienced the life and energy within the u3a movement as a whole. **I have heard from many members just how much the u3a means to them – and for many it has been a lifeline when moving to a new locality or coping with the loss of a loved one.** It has been great to learn how integrated many u3as are in their local communities. u3as create material for local archives; they enable incomers to find a place in their new community; they participate in discussions with local authority planners; they participate in local events – all actions which raise the profile of the u3a movement and encourage others to join.

Last week, I attended *Southport Flower Show* – possibly the last local u3a I will visit as Chair. The u3a had created a wonderful prize-winning garden. u3a members were dressed in various period costumes welcoming visitors and personifying our strapline – learn, laugh, live. The u3a Chair told me of the many different ways the u3a was part of the town – and how that involvement was all the more important given recent events in the town. I am pleased that changes we have made to the grants available to u3as meant the Trust had been able to provide some support to this event, but much more important is the way Southport u3a is making a real difference in the community – and Southport is not alone.

My experiences of the past three years have made me proud to be a u3a member and I am grateful for all the opportunities of the past three years to spend time with u3a members and to learn from them.

In mid-October, I hand over the Chair to Allan Walmsley. I hope he finds his time as Chair as rewarding and challenging as I have found the past three years. Many thanks to our founders for their vision over 40 years ago in creating the u3a – and the many u3a members who have made the u3a what it is today.



1 Liz Thackray on her visit to u3as in the South East in 2023

A running revelation



Four u3a members will be running *The Great North Run* next month to raise funds for *The Third Age Trust*. For Wokingham u3a member Ashley, running is a fairly new discovery, which has changed his life.

I started running with *parkrun* in 2018. Before that, I ran at school, but not for about 50 years. Running has been a complete revelation.

I want to encourage more people to start running in retirement for their physical and mental health. There's a perception that running is something that Mo Farah does, that not everyone can do, but it's rubbish. Anyone can do it. One of my running sayings is, 'I'm out to complete the race, not to compete it.'

A few months after I joined u3a, I started Wokingham u3a's Running group. The oldest person in the group is 79. He had never run before and is now running 5k and is absolutely buzzing.

I've always wanted to run *The Great North Run* so I'm thrilled to be running for u3a. Because my parents had such a good experience with u3a, I had always wanted to join. I was aware of it probably in my 30s or 40s. I'm sort of doing it [*The Great North Run*] in memory of my parents. u3a means an awful lot to me. I'm often talking to people and saying that it doesn't matter what you are interested in, there's got to be something of interest to you.

Headline photos: A display of artwork from Lincoln u3a's art group shown at a recent open day; Chair Liz Thackray (centre) with Southport u3a member Elaine and Chair Chris at their show-garden at Southport Flower Show; members playing music at *u3a Festival 24*.

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