

U3A newsletter



"I'm in a flat looking out over a street but have treated myself to three hyacinths which I can watch coming up. I thought I'd share this morning's joy at seeing the first hyacinth begin to emerge"

Kathy Bell, Beeston U3A

April 

Dear Maggie,

It seems unthinkable that the world can have changed so much since our last monthly newsletter.

Life has changed immensely and we live in unprecedented times. Yet through this period of social distancing and isolation U3As and the Trust have risen to the challenge to continue learning, chatting, and finding new interests and new friends.

Many U3As have taken interest groups on line, providing support to learn using Zoom and WhatsApp. Others have used teleconferencing and developed telephone buddy schemes.

The Trust has developed a whole series of [national programmes](#) and more will be rolled out each week U3A members are contacting me to share their

experiences and ideas. We are using those to add into our link to [learning ideas](#). You can find out more about the national programmes in Ian's section below.

What shines though all of this is the U3A members' determination to succeed to make the most of every opportunity.

We know that some U3As are closed or partially open and we will be contacting all U3As to see if we can help them get some of their interest groups online or through the phone or to ask if they can pass on the newsletter to their members so that they can get involved in the national programmes for this period of time.

If you know anyone who does not receive the newsletter currently please encourage them to [sign up](#)

We are really excited that television's fitness champion **Mr Motivator** will be providing us with a weeks worth of exercises to do at home, so watch out for keep moving with Mr Motivator. **The classes will be exclusively for U3A members - online - and will be coming out in the next two weeks - we will keep you updated with more on this (see trailer below).**

What has been really affirming is that we have had contact from a range of people interested in joining the U3A. We are facilitating this by having a central online **Trust U3A**, that can provide access to the national programmes and a signpost to enable them to join their local U3A.

It is times such as these that the importance of community and in particular a U3A community albeit a remote one makes such a difference to our daily lives.

The Trust team is working really hard to provide support to U3As around the country and to connect people together.

Keep connected and thank you all for being such an inspiration to so many.

Very best wishes

Sam

Sam Mauger - Chief Executive

In this issue...

Mr Motivator

Three New Forums

Subject Advice News







Bicester U3A member, Bill Jeffries, has been sharing his photographic experiments on the [Keeping In Touch](#) Facebook.

These photos were taken using shutter priority and throwing an orange into a glass. Read more about Bill's photo challenges on the [U3A website](#)

News from the Trust



Members' Creativity

We have had some really fantastic ideas from members on how to keep learning remotely during this time, which really showcase your creativity and adaptability.

It appears in lots of cases a small matter of not being able to leave the house has not stopped interest groups happening, whether by email, teleconference or video conference. Examples of what people are doing can be seen [on our website](#).

We have also launched a programme of national learning initiatives to get people involved either individually or to participate in within their U3A groupings.

Currently this includes our **photography project**, **U3A Eye**, our **diary project**

and our **birdwatch initiative** as well as regular mindfulness sessions and a weekly quiz.

Please keep checking [our website](#) for new content as we have got a whole raft of new initiatives which we will be launching over the next few weeks, including a national creative writing competition, and some more regular puzzles and challenges.

Please read more on Keeping in Touch and other stories at www.u3a.org.uk

😊 ***Below are just some examples of the movement-wide learning projects you can take part in:***

Mr Motivator in Da House with U3A



Mr Motivator has filmed a week long programme of exercises exclusively for U3A Members starting on Monday 20th April. Please tell all your colleagues and friends and watch his trailer here - explaining what you will need to take part

U3A Eye

Are you a budding photographer? Keen to learn a new skill or simply interested in the world around you and how it appears?

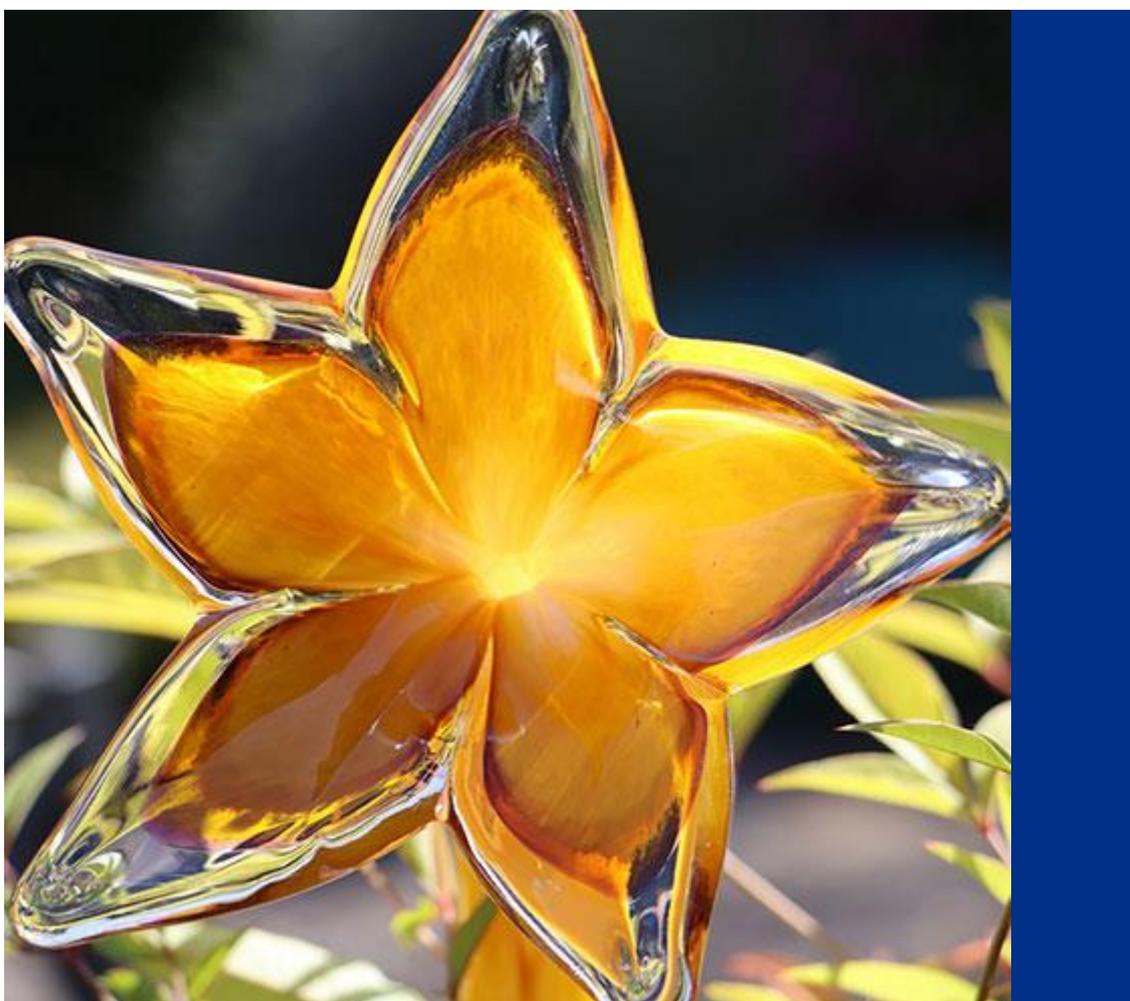
We are running a fortnightly project to encourage you to take and submit pictures of their surroundings during this unprecedented time.

This is not a competition and it is not about your photographic skill – what we want from you are interesting photos, possibly different ways of viewing things, anything which has captured your imagination or caught your eye.

Every fortnight there's a different theme and at the end of each two weeks we will choose and publish up to 15 photos on an [online gallery](#)

The current theme is 3 - deadline for submissions 1pm Thursday 23rd April.

Thank you so much -the photos you have sent so far have been really thoughtful and creative - so please keep sending them. All you need to do is upload your photo using [this form](#).



Glass Flower by John Owen Worcester U3A
"Fragile Spring. Spring sunshine and a promise of hope"

The Great Bird Watch

You are being invited to help keep track of our garden birds with BirdTrack, a free online tool to record your own bird sightings and keep up to date with trends.

Provided by the British Trust for Ornithology, [BirdTrack](#) is for observers to manage their own personal records and support BTO's work on species conservation on local, regional, national and international scales.

We would also love to hear about your sightings of different species or bird related garden activity and we will publish a selection of these sightings and photos on our website so please fill out our online form to record these also. Submit your entries [here](#).



Photo courtesy of Julie Pigula, Southport U3A

Mary Gibbons is our Birdwatching subject adviser for the U3A movement.

Mary has a lot of information on her [Subject Advice Page](#) to help with this and can help with any individual enquiries.

Look out for a feature interview with Mary and learn more about the garden birdwatch project in this month's U3A Magazine – Third Age Matters –. See more on the magazine on TAM's new twitter account [@MagU3a](#)



'Yesterday evening at 8 pm was wonderful. I live in a little street but quite a few of us stood at our windows or doorways and clapped and shouted to support the NHS and those amazing people who are risking their lives for us. It also made me feel part of a community.' – A U3A Member on the Clap For NHS

Living History Diary Project

The response to the Living History Diary Project has been incredible, with lots of members contributing their excerpts. We've compiled some of these into a Sources post, and will be posting more.

Read some of the [contributions](#) and learn more about how you can get involved:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/diary-project-2020>

Three New Forums

During these uncertain times, the Third Age Trust has been looking at different ways to support our amazing U3A community.

We have launched online discussion forums so that you can share ideas and support each other.

There will be three forums that you can join:

- **Learning** – *discussions around subjects, interests and learning.*
- **Our U3A Community** – *discussions arounds how we support each other*
- **Beacon** – *discussions around using the U3As Management System Beacon*

This is just an outline of what the forums are about because it will be led and developed by you when you join and the conversations that are happening.

It is easy to get started. All you need to do is visit the forum website at <https://forum.u3abeacon.org.uk>, click the 'register' button and fill in your details.

If you are not familiar with online forums, we have prepared a how-to guide to help you get started. We welcome your feedback on the guide.

Please join us –together we will network, discuss and stay connected.

How to Guides

The Trust team have provided a series of How to Guides to help you stay connected from email to WhyPay? - Facebook to Whatsapp. You can find them on the national website [here](#). Let us know if there's anything you need support with and we will help. Email us at national.office@u3a.org.uk

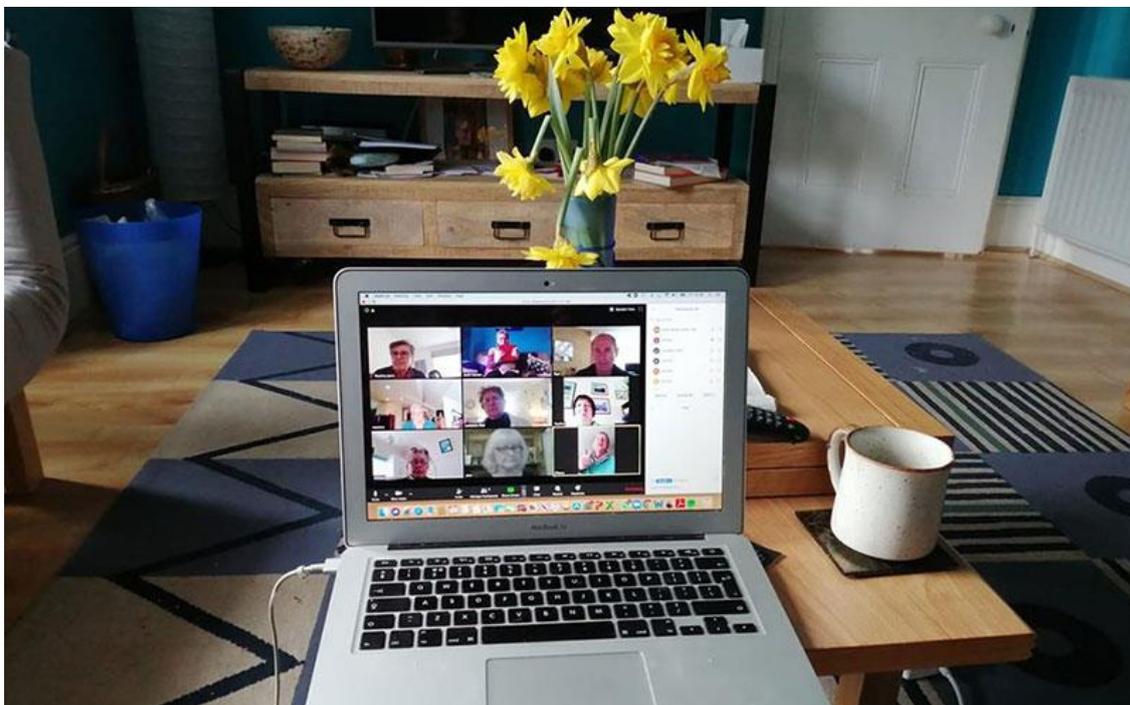
Volunteer News

Keeping In Touch in the Regions

Regional Trustees have been working with the Advice and Volunteer team to establish groups of **Regional Trust Volunteers** who will be reaching out to U3As to offer support with remaining open, supporting their members or helping interest groups to go online or to use telephone conferencing resources.

We are starting in Scotland, the South West and North West regions, who have begun to work on reaching out to their U3As to find out how they can help or to

link them with Tech Volunteers who can assist.



Teignmouth U3A hold Virtual Coffee Mornings Using Zoom

The Trust are also running **two Zoom tutorials next week, on Tuesday 14th April 2:30pm - 3:30pm and one on Thursday 16th April 10:30am - 11:30am**

Anyone can join these - from complete beginners to group convenors who are looking for a refresh.

To book on to a Zoom tutorial and discussion please email NOVolunteer@u3a.org.uk or ring 020 8466 6139

If you could let us know:

1. The day you would like to join (this will be Tuesday or Thursday)
2. Full Name
3. Name of your U3A
4. Your U3A role (if applicable)
5. A brief summary of questions you may have (optional)

By emailing you give consent to sharing your details with the Volunteer leading the tutorial so that the joining instructions can be sent across to you.

Finance News



Trust Membership Subscriptions

Finance Manager Kevin Traynor:

Firstly, may I say a big thank you to everyone for the payments you have managed to make on behalf of your U3A. I realise that you do not all have access to online banking but the post is still coming through and I am able to forward your cheques to the bank and other correspondence to my colleagues at their homes.

I know you understand that during these strange times the Trust must continue to meet its financial obligations so your support has been invaluable. I do appreciate the situation you are all in having to cut back on your activities and the impact this may have on your own U3A finances so thank you again.

The Trust is continuing to provide its normal services and as you've read so far, my colleagues have introduced new initiatives to reach out to third agers across the movement. These last few weeks have shown how important it is to be able to communicate with each other and our team are working really hard. Here at the Trust we have received and made thousands of phone calls, emails and postal communications. We have seen a significant growth in subscribers to our social media accounts, web based activities and the Newsletter. There are also many new ideas still to be finalised which I am sure will be welcomed in due course.

It has also been a real joy to speak with so many of you, I don't often have that opportunity.

TAM

The April edition of TAM is being sent out next week and this is a vital means of communication especially for those members who may be unable to access our digital services. A big thank you to Joanne Smith its new editor and the rest of the support team including our suppliers.

Beacon/Beacon Upgrade

Although work continues on the Beacon Upgrade the current restrictions will delay its rollout until the Beacon volunteer team are able to travel again. **We are very grateful for their support and patience at this time.**

Stay in touch: financemanager@u3a.org.uk

Holidays and Trips

As you might expect many of you either have or are looking to cancel or postpone trips and holidays and this is causing concern across the movement. Not only is the trip/holiday not happening but there are lots of problems concerning refunds.

We have had a great number of written and telephone enquiries and sometimes I need to take legal advice so I apologise if the responses don't follow swiftly.

The Trust's standing advice is that wherever possible:

****members should book the holiday direct with the tour operator and so outside the U3A books of account**

****scrutinise the terms and conditions and pricing, beware contracts that refer to minimum numbers of travellers as the costs could increase significantly**

****pay by credit card**

****use an ABTA registered tour operator, check the cover is still in place when you pay**

****keep updated with travel advice from both the UK and overseas governments**

Preseli U3A have been keeping their 'Painting for Pleasure' group going by sharing their paintings on a Whatsapp group and a fortnightly newsletter.



The group convenor, Kevin Jones, says, 'We feel that this virtual presence is helping us to continue to get pleasure from painting and we know that we haven't lost the wonderful warmth and support which we derive from our group.'



Lymm and Thelwall

U3A are keeping up the momentum of their Bike Maintenance and Cycling groups.

They're sharing cycling routes that members can use whilst going on individual bike rides, and have also been sharing close ups of bike parts for members to identify and also to inspire them to use this time for a bit of bike maintenance.

Do you know what part of a bike the picture (left) is of?

Malvern U3A say they are lucky to have some very technically savvy members on the team who swiftly arranged to ZOOM a trustees meeting and agreed that they should pay the necessary subscription to Zoom to enable members to form groups and hold virtual meetings if they wanted to do so. Chair Sue Lamberton said, "One delightful member, 92 years old, told me, by phone, that she does 30 minutes on her exercise bike twice a day ☆ As Chair I had already contacted the U3A in Malvern Australia and plans to carry out a

simultaneous tree planting ceremony to mark our 25th anniversary were in embryonic stage. Let us trust that this can take place in the Autumn.

Soar Valley U3A in Nottinghamshire has produced - thanks to member Paul Fileman - an excellent concise guide to help U3As develop virtual meetings and ways of keeping in touch. See it on the button below

[Soar Valley Concise Guide to Virtual Meetings](#)

News from the Board

Chair of the Board, Ian McCannah: They say that "every cloud has a silver lining". Although COVID-19 has had a major impact on readers lives, members have suggested many initiatives since the lockdown started. These include the Diary Project, U3A Eye, BirdTrack, Mindfulness, Creative Writing (launching on Tuesday), Yoga, Quizzes and a series of useful "How To" guides.

In the pipeline are Maths problems, Cryptic crosswords and even an online form of a musical/choir! **Look out for a regular flow of your ideas to inspire others.**

Another major initiative is the launch next week of Trust U3A. This is a new online U3A that offers third agers, who would otherwise be joining U3As now, the opportunity to experience U3A membership.

More details on these initiatives to keep U3A membership active are available in this newsletter and on the national website.

For myself, I am the leader of a History of Britain group in my own U3A. With technical assistance from National Office, I managed to hold a Zoom meeting this week. It was symbolic for two reasons - I mastered technology, not a strong point, and it coincided with the 10th anniversary of the group!

Keep well and continue to send your innovative ideas to the office so that they can be shared with the wider membership.

All the best,

Ian

THIRD AGE **U3A** matters

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IT'S TIME TO DO OUR BIT FOR NATURE

TV naturalist Iolo Williams tells us how

Meet Twitter's new singing sensation

PLUS! Bolton U3A delves into the secrets behind Mass Observation

HOW U3A GROUPS ARE COPING WITH COVID-19: PAGES 7, 9 & 11

Third Age Matters - Out Now

Look out for the Spring issue of TAM, which will be dropping through your letterboxes next week in a new environmentally friendly paper wrapper.

In it, TV naturalist Iolo Williams tells how his mum inspired his love of nature and what we can all do to help the environment. Bolton U3A delves into the secrets behind the Mass Observation project of the 1930s. Esther Rantzen talks about loneliness, plus we feature memories of VE Day, the creative ways U3As are keeping going during the coronavirus pandemic and how a U3A group looking at the impact of plastic changed one U3A member's life.

Events



Van Gogh Event at the National Gallery

Bernadette Murphy, Speaker at the National Gallery Van Gogh Study Event in November, gave an interview for [Sources Online](#). Murphy's research unpicks Van Gogh's life in Provence and what happened the night that he cut off his ear.

Bernadette is the author of the book 'Van Gogh's Ear' and discusses what prompted her to begin her research and what U3A members expect from the National Event.

Reaching Out

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) is publishing information and tips on how people can remain active at home.

They have released a series of exercises - designed by expert physiotherapists and can easily be done from home - to strengthen muscles and improve mood, help sleep patterns and benefit overall health and wellbeing and importantly prevent deconditioning.

www.csp.org.uk/easyexercises with printable A4 sheets aswell.



Two Covid-19 Research Projects

UCL (University College London) has asked U3A members if they want to take part in a Social Study on Covid-19. The U3A Research committee have approved this panel study which looks at the psychological and social experiences of adults in the UK during the outbreak.

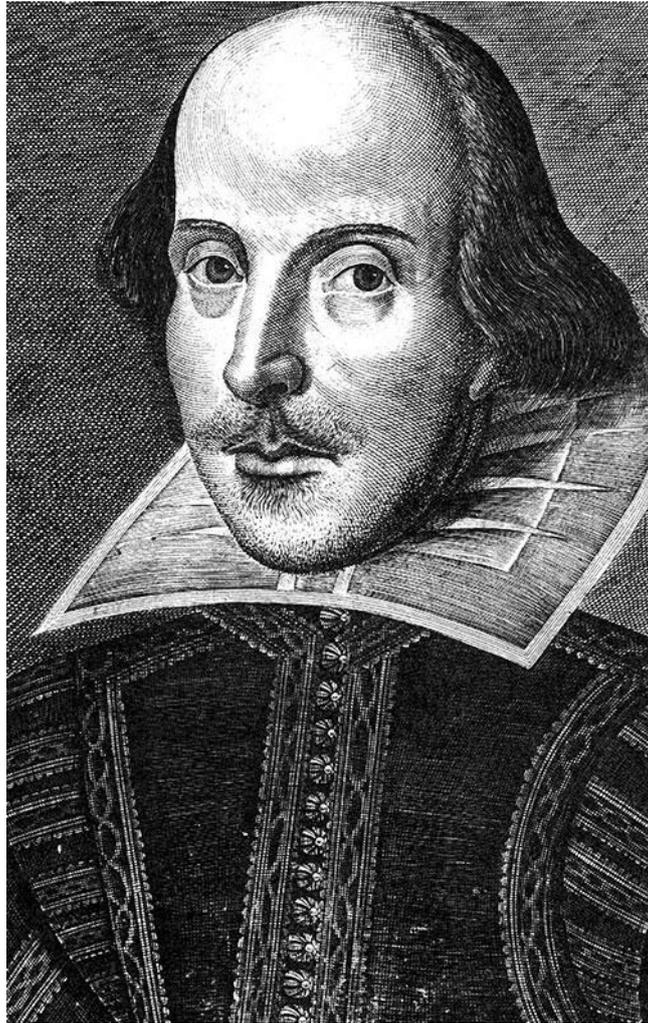
<https://redcap.idhs.ucl.ac.uk/surveys/?s=TTXKND8JMK>

For more information on the study and details of the first week results can be found on our website: <https://www.marchnetwork.org/research>

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine has requested for your support in a piece of scientific research in to the COVID-19 outbreak. As part of our research we have developed a simple online survey <https://enketo.lshtm.ac.uk/::wsqM5QPj> which takes around 15-20 minutes to complete.

Researchers are interested in learning about how people find information about COVID-19 and what they think about this information. They want to know about the effects that the outbreak is having on people's physical/mental health and about how they are coping in these difficult times.

Subject Advice News



Subject Advisor – Shakespeare

Ray Waterhouse, The Subject Advisor for Shakespeare has found lots of resources so you can keep studying the Bard from home.

There are free screenings available from The Royal Shakespeare Company, <https://www.rsc.org.uk/education/about-rsc-education/home-learning-with-the-rsc>
The National Theatre, <https://nationaltheatre.org.uk/nt-at-home> and The Globe, <https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/watch/>

There is updates and advice from our subject advisers in Yoga, Mindfulness, Table Tennis and Gardening. Find Subject Advice [here](#)

U3A Day - October 1 2020

Getting involved with the media

Remember all the planning you did for our first national U3A Day to be held on Wednesday 3 June? There were to be displays, exhibitions, performances, flash mobs, tea parties, hands-on experiences....and so much more. You now know we have postponed the public events until Thursday 1 October 2020

BUT....

Let's still use **Wednesday 3 June** to blitz the media with all the positive, remarkable stories of what we are doing NOW. Celebrate how your U3A community are using creative ways to stay healthy, active and connected with each other- digital and non digital ways.

You can use the press release template by pressing the button below or use your own but lets take this opportunity to celebrate U3A.

[Proforma Press Release](#)

And why not get involved with the BBC's Local Radio Make A Difference Project - where you can submit articles about what you are doing during this time. Find the details at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3yrtgmkfHBbsXfQfYkIp7CF/make-a-difference>

Which well known High-Street shop is this: Footwear for Cats? (5 words)

We won't give you the answer - yet.

Check out our weekly quiz where Chris Wright, the Subject Adviser for quizzes has put together six weekly quizzes designed to challenge you and get you thinking. Answers out next week – go to this week's quiz -

[Shop Around](#)

The [Quiz Subject Advice](#) page also contains guidance and resources in case you've been inspired and want to organise your own quizzes – see

Subject Advice news further down.

Social Media News



We have been posting every week day on our **Twitter** with resources, ideas and examples of the things U3A members are doing across the country. Follow here, https://twitter.com/U3A_UK

A Third Age Matters Twitter account has been set up. Here, members will be able to engage in conversation with the magazine and get first look at content in upcoming editions. Follow on @MagU3a

Chair, Ian McCannah also has a Twitter account that he will use more regularly to engage with the membership. Follow here, <https://twitter.com/chairu3a>

As well as posting regularly on our U3A Facebook account, the [Keeping In Touch](#) Facebook group now has over 2, 500 members.

Members have been sharing photographs, reflections, posts they've found funny and ways that they're keeping their interest groups going.



Happy Birthday

Many members have been celebrating birthdays around the country during this isolation - not able to go out and celebrate. We want you to know we are thinking of all of you who have celebrated or are celebrating anniversaries. **We are sending you big birthday wishes and virtual hugs** - and look forward to seeing your wonderful photos of your celebrations once we are out of this time.

In Focus



Mhairi-Aileen Smeir Chair of Isle of Arran U3A talks about her newly formed U3A

The Isle of Arran U3A with a steering committee of eight, was launched on the 28th January with over 100 people attending on the day.

By the 16th of March, when we cancelled all our face to face meetings due to the Covid-19 situation, we had 27 active groups.

We turned to social media to try and

continue contact within each group and across the membership. We have 124 members and all but 7 have access to email. This means we can pass information quickly and effectively.

The groups that can continue remotely are doing so - Yesterday the fledgling Ukulele group had its first conference call, the leader stuck in Oxfordshire with the group in Arran, the wonders of modern life!

All our members are very positive and helping to keep each other that way at this really difficult time. We are all determined that our brilliant beginning will not be defeated by this and are looking forward by planning for the future when

normality returns to our very beautiful Island.

The U3A is such an all inclusive and welcoming organisation that it lends itself as a vehicle to recovery from this national emergency, for all the older members of the community and beyond.

Photo (Left) - Isle of Arran U3A in earlier times - photo credit: Mairi Stalker Christie



Did somebody forward this email to you?

Sign up at u3a.org.uk/email and we will send it to you directly

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