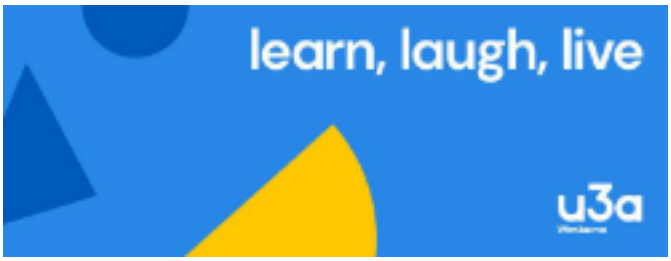
u3a Wimborne

Wimborne u3a Newsletter

Editor: Vic Grayson



Autumn 2026

Hello all, and welcome to our Autumn 2026 Newsletter

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An opening message from the Chair

Hello everyone and welcome to the Autumn edition of the Newsletter. We're now well into the term but apart from a couple of hiccups it's been a very successful start to the new year. We have several new courses and, more importantly, over 80 new members, which is just want we need as we have also lost over 50. We're going to do a bit of analysis on what is happening, but as I frequently say we need to get new blood in, to ensure that there is a steady growth overall, and a drop in the average age! I'll report back on the research when it's completed.

One reason for the increase in numbers is undoubtedly the increased coverage of our activities we've achieved through leaflet distribution, the local print publications and, of course, our new all singing, all dancing website. I hope you have paid a visit and had a look round. You're welcome to put news items relevant to our u3a through our Website manager Alan Pickering. We've also just started a Facebook page u3a Wimborne. It's important that we get as much traffic as possible,

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so if you use Facebook please join up and share what we're doing. However, word of mouth is probably still the most important source of new members, and we do encourage you to tell anyone who might be interested to get involved.

We know that as Winter approaches members can't make sessions, and it is really helpful if the convenor can be notified of absence. If they don't hear from someone for three consecutive sessions they will offer the place to someone else where there is a waiting list.

This newsletter has a whole range of stories and items from the Summer onwards. We have delayed the launch until after the AGM , in order that we can report on the outcome. So I hope you enjoy reading it. You'll see that we've done a quite a lot of events this year, as well as things like leaflet distribution, giving talks to other groups, a bit of meeting and greeting at events etc, and we are always looking for people who can help out. We don't need a big commitment, but a few little contributions can make all the difference.

Happy reading!

Ashley Rowlands

Vikki Slade visits our u3a



In conversation with Vikki Slade at a community event, our Chair invited her to visit to Wimborne u3a, which she was happy to accept. The question was how best to provide it and give her the best opportunity to meet members. We have such a disparate group of activities, it didn't seem sensible just to select one. We thought about inviting her to the AGM, but that would be too formal, and she has enough of committees to last a lifetime. So, we finally opted for the Convenors' thank you lunch as a venue, which took place in September at the Reef in Colehill. We knew we would get a good number of our convenors present, and she could spend time talking to them over lunch.

Her visit went really well, and she must have spoken to virtually everyone there. She gave a short address at the end of her visit and talked about her plans for improving facilities in her constituency. She also paid tribute to our work, to offering important recreational activities to the retired community. She recognised the challenges of trying to open up access to those who are lonely and isolated, and agreed with us that this task requires the whole network of agencies - statutory and voluntary - working with the post-retired, to establish good communications and to work collaboratively. She also confirmed her commitment to the campaign to make Wimborne an age-friendly town.

A big thank you to her for taking the time to come and talk to us and listen to what we had to say.

u3a supports our local Community theatre group

Over the year, u3a committee members have been involved in meeting with a number of community groups associated with support for our constituency of post-retired.



We have had productive talks with Planet Wimborne, a consortium of voluntary groups concerned with environmental protection, and they are now running a workshop-based programme which is running as part of this year's offering.

Another group who approached us were the Wimborne Community Theatre (WCT). As you may know, Wimborne won the award to be the 2026 Dorset Town of Culture and the WCT play that they put on at Kingston Lacey in September was one of the key activities in the Town of Culture programme. The play was interactive - the opening scene was based on a market setting. So different community groups were invited to set up a stall and provide staff for it for the audience to wander round and enjoy what was on offer. We decided to get involved and set up a rota of volunteers, two per night, to come in from Tuesday until Sunday to participate. It was a good opportunity for the audience to discover more about u3a, and it also provided support to the theatre group. **And - the play was a great success!**

A grand start to our Talks programme

As seasoned u3a members will know, our Talks programme is something of a jewel in the crown. We have been running six sessions over the Autumn and Spring terms for many years, and we will be doing so again during 2026-7. We have kept the cost down to £2 for members (£4 for non members) so it's great value for money. This year the responsibility for organisation has been passed from Janice Deane, who did such a sterling job, to Janet Isaac, one of our new Committee members. She has already got all the speakers booked for the year, and has very effectively taken up the job from Janice.



The first talk took place on October 16th and was given by Martin Stewart of Stewart's Garden Centre. He gave a fascinating history of the family business, how it grew and how it was one of the first in the country to have what we now call a 'garden centre'. The talk was well attended and the morning was very successful.

Our next talk is coming up on Friday November 20th at the Methodist Hall, when the theme will be 'My life as a Micro Artist'. Graham Short is internationally known for his unique style of art – for example, he has engraved the Lord's Prayer on the head of pin. His talk will be full of fascinating facts and stories of his professional career. We hope you can come along.

Our last talk this term is on Friday, December 11th. Richard Hutley will present 'Nikola Tesla: The Maverick Hungarian', exploring the achievements and legacy of the visionary inventor.

All talks take place at Wesley Hall, Methodist Church, King Street in Wimborne at 10am for a 10.30am start. No booking required. £2 for u3a members; £4 for non-members.

For more information about Wimborne u3a please visit our website wimborne.u3asite.uk or contact us at 07352 309065

u3a Matters

u3a National produces a regular magazine. There are some really interesting articles to be found in the latest 90 page Autumn Issue 73 Edition. It's only £4 a year! If you are not a 'hard copy/ postal' subscriber, you can read every article online using this handy link (CTRL/left click):

u3a - u3a matters Autumn 2026 - screen reader edition

New groups – a profile

KEEP FIT ACTIVE and CHAIR BASED — Convenor Kath Hollingworth

Each group meets on alternative Thursday mornings at St Michael's Church Centre, Colehill.

These two groups of enthusiastic Keep-fitters exercise to music. Exercises are aimed at enhancing mobility, cardiovascular health, muscle strength, flexibility, coordination, breathing, falls reduction and relaxation; presented by this qualified instructor. Members exercise at their own rate and only do the exercises which are suitable, safe and appropriate for themselves.

Resistance bands, light weights, hoops and balls are used. Equipment and leaflets are provided for personal use for members to be able to exercise at home between sessions. Verbal encouragement is given during classes, advising on the benefits of various types of exercise to keep us motivated. It is also fun with the occasional bit of banter!





New groups – an update

We have a number of new groups this year and we are hoping for more in January. The second term will be the last opportunity for us to put on new groups in this round – we hope to have more for 2028/9.

This January we have a Chess group, the Literary Classics, and two sister groups, one on Maritime and one on Aviation. Please keep an eye out for your messages from Horace, like this one recently sent:



Our u3a meetings

Just to remind you that we now have a regular meetings structure.

For members you can drop in to the Coffee morning at the Kings Head on a Saturday. We also had a very well attended new members meeting in early November. For the Convenors, the Committee meet with them once a term, and if you wish to raise any matters, please mention it to your convenor so they can bring it along to the meeting, if they attend, or email the Chair.

We value feedback on how things are going. The Committee meets six times a year and there is always a very full agenda!

Our 2026 AGM

Wimborne u3a held its 24th AGM at Wimborne Methodist Church Hall on Saturday November 7th. Over 50 members attended and the business of the meeting was successfully completed.

As an independent charity we have to abide by the rules of the Charities Commission as well as the national u3a. So a good turnout is important as we need to have a quorum – 10% of the membership – to enable us to vote in the committee and approve any other major changes to the way we operate.

This year we had to ratify our new constitution as well vote in the new Committee. In fact all the current committee members had agreed to stay on and there were no other nominations for the posts. One change is that we have had a vacant officer post for most of the year - Vice Chair - and Chris Hall, who was co-opted on to the committee last year has agreed to take on that position. We have had one additional expression of interest to join the committee and we are keen to hear from anyone else who can offer some help.

Being on the committee doesn't involve a huge commitment of time and may be related to looking after one aspect of the u3a work. We are able to co-opt onto the committee at any time during the year.

The Chair was able to report that we have had a very good year. At the time of writing we have increased the membership by 20, with 81 new members, and we have increased our offering to, currently, 50 different groups with several having more than one intake. This stops the previous trend of overall decline in membership as new arrivals failed to make up for those who didn't rejoin. We will always have this challenge because of the nature of the membership, so we must keep our foot on the pedal.

The Treasurer reported that we are financially secure with over £25k in reserves. Last year, we did invest more in marketing and publicity, but this has borne fruit in the increase in new members. We were able to easily absorb the additional costs.

For more details you are invited to visit the website where we will publish the minutes of the meeting and the reports.

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There was a good debate at the end of the meeting, based around the 3 year Development Plan that has been produced. The Chair indicated that we will want to increase net growth by at least 10%, and the range of activities on offer by 10% as well. Members asked about the need for the average age of the membership to come down by the recruiting of 'younger retired'. This is a priority for the Committee but not easy to achieve. There were also requests for continuing with paper applications, which we will do, and for there to be ways to improve the waiting list situation.

It was pointed out that there will always be a tension between improving the marketing to attract extra numbers and the popularity of certain courses. The Committee will be working to try and set up alternatives e.g. extra convenors to run additional groups etc. to address the problem in the future.

Generally, the members felt positive about the organisation, and we all look forward to building on the strong foundations that have been established.

Your new u3a Committee for 2026 -27

Following the AGM, this is a list of your new committee members:

Ashley Rowlands	Chair
Chris Hall	Vice Chair
Jayne Twomey	Treasurer
Chris Letchford	Secretary
Horace Letchford	Membership Secretary
Heather Lowe	Venues Secretary
Viv Pink	Convenors Secretary (note new title)
Alan Pickering	Website and Beacon Administrator
Janet Isaac	Development/Talks Co-ordinator