



Wigan Newsletter

Summer 2024

Hello again,

Well at least Summer did finally make a brief appearance. I am looking forward to our Wimbledon themed afternoon in July and was glad to see that those who attend our York trip had a fantastic time. Hopefully we will continue to need suncream rather than an umbrella for upcoming plans!

As always, before I finish and leave you to have a read, I would just like to say a huge thank you to the Committee members and the Group Leaders. Without them we would not have a thriving u3a. If you would like to set up a group or to assist a leader don't hesitate to get in touch. Help is there to support you in this.

Take Care, Sue

(from Chairman Sue Wilcock)

So what IS the u3a?

We like to think of ourselves as "a youth club for older people".

The u3a is a collection of local branches (700+ across the UK) operating under the umbrella of the charitable organisation 'Third Age Trust'. It is for older people – who've long since left behind our 'first age' of youth and education, plus a 'second age' of an adult life committed to work and raising families - we find ourselves now stepping into our 'third age' of retiring from full time work.

Hopefully with many years ahead for sociable activities and to develop new interests and keep active. And, with more time for ourselves, maybe looking for more like-minded people to mix with, new activities to try, projects you haven't had time for till now.

Read on to find out what our Wigan members get up to ...

NEW SUBSCRIPTION YEAR

We are now into our 2024-2025 subscription year. Hopefully existing members will have renewed their memberships by now. If not, its maybe because you've not been able to come along to cricket club meetings; but do remember there are other ways to send payments – do contact the membership team if any problems in this area. membership.enquiries@u3awigan.co.uk

If you wondered why you haven't received a printed membership card for this year, then this is due to us swapping over to a new system of plastic barcoded membership cards, which you'll retain for longer term use – to be issued over the summer. In the meantime if you need to check on your member number or get a card to present to get discounted rates at other u3a's, you can print a temporary card via our website 'member portal' page or can contact the membership team (as above) for assistance.

OUR NEXT SOCIAL EVENT – A DATE FOR THE DIARY



WIGAN U3A GARDEN PARTY



On Wednesday 10th July you are all invited to Wigan u3a Summer Garden Party. It will be at Wigan Cricket Club and this year the theme will be Wimbledon. Starting at 1pm till 4pm.

Bring your own picnic lunch, and the bar will be open for Pimms and other alcoholic and non-alcoholic refreshments.

There will be entertainment and Wimbledon related games. So get your tennis gear out - even if that means a trip up into the attic! -and join us for a great afternoon.

It is a free event however the social events committee will be collecting names at our Speakers and Members meetings so we know who we can expect to be there. Come and join the fun.

OTHER UP-COMING EVENTS DATES

Speakers Topics for Next 3 Months

**July 3rd. Ian Trumble
"Annie's Trip to Egypt"**

Exotic travel was usually a Victorian gentleman's pastime, but this is a tale about a local woman who had her own adventures in the 1880's.

**August 7th. Kevin and Joy Siddall
"The DNA of British Musicals"**

Some of the greatest songs from musical theatre of the 20th century and stories about their creation, their context and their continued popularity.

**September 4th. Pete Mellor
"The Assassination of JFK"**

By an expert on this topic who has spoken on this subject both here in the UK and at conferences in the USA.

Outings

**Wed Jun 26th
Visit York with a Guide**

**Thu Sep 12th
Cannon Hall, Barnsley
(Museum, Village, Garden Centre & Farm)**

Dining Out

**Thur July 11
Lunch at Miller and Carter,
Parbold.**

Coffee and Natter

Plus any Wednesdays without Cricket Club Meetings, come along to the Royal Oak on Standishgate, from 11 am



NT Visit, Curry Night, Theatre Backstage Tour, Ceilidh night, Quiz time at a Members meeting ... just a taster of our social events

Always well attended and fun gatherings – so do check them out!

PLUS THINKING WIDER

A little reminder, too, that your membership fee covers you not only for local activities within the Wigan u3a but also gives access to other Regional and National initiatives – photo, art and writing competitions, summer schools, research projects, plus finding out what other u3a branches get up to ... Check out the national web site at <https://www.u3a.org.uk/> and the regional website at <https://u3asites.org.uk/north-west/home> Perhaps sign up for newsletters to be kept in touch with activities here too.

One regional event that has been popular with our members in previous years is the North West Summer School, held in Carlisle Tuesday 13th – Friday 15th August. Costs for accommodation and tuition, plus more details on course options, are on that regional website mentioned above, or come and chat to either myself or Alan or Sally Lang if you want to know more. I've included here a report back from Sally for the same event last year

“ This 2023 North West u3a summer school was held in Carlisle, based at this bustling Cumbrian city's university. Aimed mainly at North West u3a members, some delegates had sneaked over the border from Yorkshire - and beyond! The summer school takes place over four days in August and six courses were on offer ranging from archaeology to art. It's a very sociable get together with evenings including wine appreciation (thanks Mike), a quiz and a 'gala dinner'. The organising committee worked hard to ensure the week was a great success. As you can imagine, the summer school is very popular, so if you'd be interested in attending - and it'd be great to see a good Wigan contingent - keep an eye on the North West newsletter, or speak to the Wigan committee. ”

If you need any further information on topics covered in the newsletter, enquiry links are available for individual group leaders via group pages on website, or you can mail us on enquiries@u3awigan.co.uk, for more general issues, or for anything specific to this newsletter content (or contributions to future newsletters) to cath.simpson@u3awigan.co.uk. Alternately come along to our 1st and 3rd Wednesday Open meetings to have a chat to one of our committee members.

News from the Interest Groups

Information here for our regular hobby or activity groups. With thanks to our leaders for the descriptions below of what their groups have been up to recently and what's planned in coming months.

For the very latest list of groups, details of exactly how they operate, and for links to get in touch with named leaders by email, do however also check out the Groups website pages. <https://u3asites.org.uk/wigan/groups>

Ancestry

3rd Thursday of Month Museum of Wigan Life, 10:30

This is the place to come to research your family tree, by discovering the different platforms available to find information.

If you've already dived into the fascinating world of finding your family history, then bring along what you've discovered to date and hopefully add to previous findings. Or if you are just starting, this is a great introduction to the subject.

Leader: Peter Green

Book Club

3rd Monday of Month Royal Oak, 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm



The Book club continues to deliver lively and interesting monthly chat, covering a wide range of popular books. It's a round-the-table format, meeting in the Royal Oak

pub on Standishgate, and covers a wide range of genres and authors. Suggestions for new topics and formats are welcomed. So whether you like thrillers or history or biographies, whether you have an author you want to recommend or are just looking to expand on your usual selections, there's always something new to discuss.

The original group is currently full, however as more names get added to the waiting list the hope is to start a new group later this year – lots of advice and encouragement needed if anyone wants to be involved in getting the ball rolling on that plan.

Leader: Sheila Wignall

Crafts Group

2nd & 4th Fridays in Month BookCycle, 10 am

We meet twice a month trying our hand at different skills. We have recently decorated terracotta pots, crocheting and making drinks coasters.

This however is another group currently running at full capacity, but do still speak up if you have an interest in crafting, in any form.

It would be great to have a second group in this area, either general crafts or perhaps a more specialist area such as needlecraft or art. Do let Sue or the committee know if this is your thing.

Leader: Sue Orrell

Creative Writing **2nd & 4th Thursday of Month** **Postcode Cafe, 1:30 pm**

Whilst we haven't (yet) had a Booker Prize win, the writing group continues to produce a range of writing, everything from haikus to short stories, non-fiction, flash fiction and more.

One of our members has recently had a book of poetry published (congratulations Bill), we've had a runner up in a national short story competition, and several members are working on really interesting projects as we speak.

Our meetings continue to be a mix of sharing work, chatting, discussing upcoming competitions, chatting, inspiration for writing, chatting, oh, and drinking coffee. Did I mention chatting?



Whilst the group is now pretty much at capacity, please get in touch if you'd like to go on a waiting list to join us. No experience necessary, but if you are that Booker Prize Winner, you'd be very welcome too! We are also

looking to take part in other local writing activities and events, to spread our wings beyond just our own little circle.

Leader: Sally Lang

Crown Green Bowling **Weekly Sessions (Mon or Tue)** **Boars Head**

It's that time of year again – even if the weather forecasts don't always feel very spring like. Indoor Bowling ends and Crown Green Bowling kicks off again. It's a new season so the greens fee of £10 is now payable, but covering you from now to autumn. Sessions on both Monday and Tuesday, 10:30 to 12:00, at the Boars Head pub.



A sociable and fun excuse to get out to enjoy whatever sunny days

Leader: Jimmy Wignall

Cryptic Crosswords **2nd & 4th Friday in Month** **Postcode Café, 10 am**

I know the typical image of the crossword solver is perhaps quite serious and solitary, and maybe a little competitive too – but our Wigan group is proof this does not have to be the case. We have a great time bouncing ideas around,

going off on lots of conversational tangents, and having a good laugh.

With a bit of collaboration we are able to take on the more devious clues, think laterally when needed, and surprise ourselves with what obscure bits of knowledge are tucked away in our memories. Aiming to keep the brain exercised and dementia at bay in the process.

Leader: Cath Simpson

Cycling **In Assoc with BeWell Wigan** **Speak to Leader for Info**

Acting as a link to local BeWell cycling team for bike hire and training for those who haven't been on two wheels for some time; or being the leader for some more challenging (but still mainly off road) routes – Ron's shares his enthusiasm for cycling with anyone else who would like to come along.

Leader: Ron Hardy

Dining Out **See Events List for** **Dates and Venues**

The Dining Out Group continues to be very popular. We now meet for a meal once a month, on a Thursday, with several different people stepping into the organiser role.

Destinations so far in 2024 have included a delicious 3 course lunch at The Wheel (a bargain for only £12, and so filling that it was a struggle to finish dessert); two of our always enjoyable Curry Nights at The Raj Gate in Orrell; a lunch visit to 'Summat to Ate' in Hindley

(steak cooked to taste on a hot rock' at 400° C being the choice for half of the attendees), and now in June a return to The Wheel, for a Best of British themed meal.

To book a place on any of the dining out events, you need to sign up (and bring your payment in an envelope with your name and membership number on) at the Cricket Club meetings – as the events are usually quickly sold out.

Leader: Jenny Swift

French and Spanish **Beech Hill Book Cycle** **1st Friday/Thursday of Month**

These two different groups are both led by Jo, at the Book Cycle venue. A chance to come down and join in relaxed discussions in French on the Friday date, and Spanish on The Thursday – to practice your language skills and expand your vocabulary and understanding of the language.

Leader: Jo Hunt

Gardening **New Shoots?**

Gardening is one subject where we regularly get enquiries for what is on offer, however our existing group is full to capacity and no longer accepting any new members.

If there is anyone out there who has a real interest in this area, has ideas for topics and activities, and would consider stepping into an 'organiser' role to pull together some initial dates – then our Group Co-ordinator, Cath, would love to hear from you! Come and have a

chat at the groups table in the entry hall at the next member's meeting. Lots of advice and help available to anyone who would like to start a new group in this or any other subject!

Leader: TBC

General History Group 2nd Thursday in Month Tesco Community Room 10:30

Some changes in this are in recent months, with Heather taking on the leadership role, and with a move to more of a round-table (and free of charge) venue at Tesco.

To set the ball rolling, Heather's first talk was about the conquest of S America & the treasure obtained - showing that looking at one topic opened up many different areas of interest. Next the topic was the early Georgians, with everyone making a contribution; confirming that our aim to make this more of a discussion group had succeeded.

This was followed by bubbles & crashes... what could be learned from the past and the history of tea?

We have a small group of regular members but room for a few more...no expertise required.

Leader: Heather Griffiths

Hill Walking Speak to Leader for Info

This is our walking group that ventures further and higher ...

Once a month, the group sets off for walks in the different ranges of hills or mountains, that are within travelling distance from Wigan,

perhaps one month the Lake District, the next the Peak District, or perhaps just the West Lancs Moors right on the doorstep. See the link on the group's website page for proposed dates and destinations.

Note however that this is always subject to change, depending on weather and conditions underfoot, so DO speak to Rick to get the latest information and meeting point details.

Leader: Rick Alston

Line Dancing 2nd Monday in Month Hallgate House, 13:00-15:00

For a bit of uplifting line dancing you can find us at Hallgate House - generally on the second Monday of each month, 1pm to 3pm.

If you fancy some fun, music and dancing in a very relaxed atmosphere and a break for a coffee and chat this is the place to come. Dancing teachers, Ray and Mildred and are very patient and welcoming.

It's a great form of exercise, and no partner required. We are all learners and it is great fun. New members very welcome to join us.

Leader: Angela Grundy

Local Walks 1st and 3rd Friday in Month See Website for Details

The local walking group has been able to continue with two walks per month over the winter period even with - at one point - three of the

leaders unable to actually lead a walk due to injuries!

The turnout has been low on some walks but this could be weather related and I know it's not much fun being up to your knees in mud. Hopefully the weather and turnout will improve over the next few months



A big thank you to John and Jimmy who have continued to lead the group on some great walks around the area with two of John's walks starting with a short train ride.

Also special thanks to Sheila and Alf who have led two walks for us over this period, your support is greatly appreciated.

We are in need of other members to lead walks so that we can continue with this group, so please come forward if you can suggest and be the guide for a walk of about 5 miles. I am happy to do the notifications etc. - we just need someone to lead the way.

Anyone who wishes to join the local walking group please contact me by email: ray.stafford@u3awigan.co.uk or speak to me at our monthly meetings. Thanks.

Leader: Ray Stafford

Meet and Fish Speak to Leader for Info

Small and informal – with trips typically arranged at the last minute over the phone. A good day out with lots of laughs.

Leader: Jimmy Wignall

Memoir And Novel Writing 1st and 3rd Tuesdays in Month Caffe Rosso, 10:45 – 13:00

This is our second offering for writers, alongside the more general Creative Writing sessions. This group however is for those who are planning or working on or exploring publishing options for a more extended piece of work. It's a small group, getting together around our cafe table. And very much discussion based, with contributions from everyone – one of our members has described it as rather like an informal tutorial group.

Leader: Michael Hunt

Music Appreciation 4th Thursday of Month BookCycle, 13:30 – 15:00

We have leaders who are actively involved in our local music scene coming along to share their enthusiasms here. Ian and Peter come with experience from their roles with Wigan Jazz Festival, the Really Awful Orchestra, and more, and they tap into a whole variety of music resources and expertise.

So if music and music-making are your thing, do come along and give us a try.

Leader: Ian Darrington

Photography
4th Monday of Month, 14:00-16:00, Ince Community Centre

The Photography group is for anyone who wants to capture a better image – whether on a simple camera or a smart phone, or on more advanced camera kit. Finding good subjects to shoot, and giving some thought to a good angle, light conditions and shooting style...

In autumn a new venue gave us a large bright room with the chance to do more practical work, with the main topic for winter months being 'table top' studio type subjects (flowers, still life, etc.): dealing with distractions, focus and exposure challenges. Then in April we started to look outwards again with a talk by local Wildlife Photographer Phil Jones on how to get more natural shots of garden birds and other visitors.

Going into summer we'll have a mix of indoor and outdoor sessions. No indoor meeting in May due to Bank Holiday, but a trip to a local Bird of Prey Centre instead. Further outings planned for gardens, sports events, etc., plus a suggestion for a sub-group for photo editing. Lots of on-line chat to share images and info on photo opportunities.

If you want to be kept in touch with what is going on, then please ask to be on the contact list. Attendees welcome to come regularly, or just join in the bits that interest them. Old and new members welcome.

Leader: Cath Simpson

Pickleball
Wednesdays, Weekly
Robin Park, 13:00 to 15:00

Pickleball is becoming one of the most exciting sports in the UK. It's a sport that combines elements of tennis, badminton and table tennis using a paddle and plastic ball with holes. It's played on a badminton court making rallies more manageable and requires less running around, which is great for players looking for a less physically demanding game. A sport that's appropriate for all ages and skill levels. The rules are simple, and it's a great opportunity to get some exercise and enjoy a social afternoon regardless of the weather.

Leader: Chris Spence

Scrabble
Tuesdays or Wednesdays
Postcode Cafe, various

The classic game to test out your vocabulary and strategy, as well as your luck in getting the right letters at the right time! This group is now restarted again, with friendly games over a cup of coffee and cake. Meeting days vary to be able to suit all our players, so do get in touch if you want to know when to come along to join us.

Leader: Jean Jackson

Singing for Fun
Tuesdays, Weekly
Cricket Club, 13:30 – 15:00

Our singing group continues to enjoy a fun afternoon, once a week, with singing coach Lauren Waterworth – although our summer break is now fast approaching. The group will temporarily close at end of June, and restart at beginning of September.

Meeting time is at the Cricket club every Tuesday 1.30 till 3.00, and new members always welcome.

Leader: Jimmy Wignall

Table Tennis **2nd and 4th Tuesdays in Month** **St Lukes, 13:00 to 15:00**



The table tennis group has been going since October last year and has steadily grown in popularity. We have three tables to play on and have a good mix of enthusiastic ladies and gents who have a laugh as they play or chat over a tea/coffee while eating chocolate hobnobs!!

We play at St Lukes Church Hall in Orrell, opposite the Orrell Water Park. New members are welcome, at all levels of ability. Please get in touch with David if you would like to join these 'bat and chat' sessions.

Leader: David Byron

Ten Pin Bowling **2nd and 4th Fridays. 13:30** **Hollywood Bowl**

This started as a winter only group, but it was proving so much fun that this year it has continued to meet. Getting together twice a month inside the Hollywood Bowl, for 1.30

start. Fun and relaxing, come and play or just watch. If you haven't bowled before, no problem, others will help you.

Make yourself known on arrival if this is your first visit.

Leader: Barbara and Ron Hardy

Theatre Group **See Events List** **Various Locations**

Many people have joined us for visits to Wigan Little Theatre or for backstage tours of local venues.

In January we watched 'Home I'm Darling' at WLT – a satirical comedy about a couple who embrace the 1950's lifestyle. In February it was a visit to the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester, for a fascinating backstage tour, and then lunch in the nearby Wetherspoons.

Next it was back to WLT for 'When we are Married' - a well-known comedy by J.B. Priestley about four couples who on their 25th wedding anniversary find out they were not legally married! This was very well received.

Last month was another visit, this time to tour St. George's Hall in Liverpool - a Grade 1 listed Victorian building, which is reputed to be one of the finest examples of Neoclassical style in the world!

And next it is back at WLT for a production of 'Cider with Rosie' - a charming, evocative and poignant recollection of Laurie Lee's childhood in a remote Cotswold village in the period after the First World War.

Keep an eye on the events list for our future plans.

Leader: Jenny Swift

Ukulele Group Sadly Discontinued

Our Ukelele group closed at the end of 2023, as leader Stephen's other commitments made it difficult to keep up regular meetings.

However they did go out with a party and with a final round of charity fund raising, with Christmas performances raising over £1,200 for Fur Clemt foodbank and cafe.

With thanks to retiring leader Stephen Corless for the many years in which he headed up this group.

Urban Sketching Wednesday 10:00 - 12:00 Various Locations

The theme so far for 2024.....WET
WET WEDNESDAYS!

As a group based outdoors, we have found the weather rather challenging. The page might be full of ink and paint drips but it all added to the atmosphere as we continued to meet up and sketch. Here we are drying off in the Postcode Cafe after bouncing rain at Eckersley's Mill.



Rain, rain, go away! Hoping for some drier and warmer days ahead.

The challenge of finding suitable cafes which are big enough for our end-of-session throw down of sketches, chat and coffee however does limit our numbers, so not currently accepting new members – but do ask to be added to our waiting list should places come free or a second group start.

Leader: Sally Duggan

Wine Appreciation 1st Tues in Month, 19:30 - 21:00 Highfield Cricket Club

Since the last newsletter, we have enjoyed tastings from Eastern Europe, South Africa and Chile, as well as recommendations for Christmas lunch wine/food pairings, and recommendations for holiday drinking in Greece, Italy and Spain.

We continue to attract good attendances from existing and new members at Highfield Cricket Club, where we are made most welcome

Leader: Mike Crickett

Yoga Each Monday, 10:30 - 11.30 St Andrews Parish Hall

Our Monday morning Yoga sessions with Ali continue to be a great way to start the week. We've recently begun to dabble in some beginning of the week meditation which is a great prelude to some asanas (yoga moves). We're not yet up to headstands or doing the splits – but watch this space!

Leader: Alan Lang