

Groups Update February 2025

With the new website now up and running, with all its extra content and more up-to-date news, we will no longer be producing a full printable newsletter. However we did want to bring members up to date with what's happening in our 'activity groups'.

These tend to tick over quietly, meeting regularly - every one or two weeks, or at monthly intervals. People with particular shared interests getting together to take part in Walks, Sports, Hobbies, Crafts, etc. With no 'one-off dates', you normally don't hear much about them at all. We'll therefore still send out these occasional Group Update emails so that group leaders can keep everyone in touch with any changes.

*Unfortunately, as seen on the website, several groups are closed to new members, having reached full capacity for numbers we can fit into a venue or into a single discussion group. However, as leaders, we hate having to say no to new joiners, so for some of these groups – where there are already several names on the waiting list – we're looking to see if we can set up second groups for the **same** subjects. Mostly on the same lines as the original group, with the help of the original leaders to kick things off. Why re-invent the wheel when we've got a formula that works!?*

We've also got plenty existing groups that continue to welcome members, so a shout out for these too.

Regards, Cath Simpson (Web Admin & Group Co-ordinator)

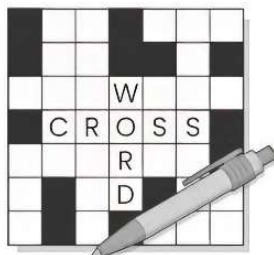
So, three potential new 'second' groups, coming soon.

For **BOOK CLUB** we aim to start a new group in **March**, slotted in between the meetings of the current group. This will normally be the afternoon of the **FIRST MONDAY** of the month, meeting – as the original one does – in the Royal Oak pub, 13:30 till 15:00. Sheila W. will come along to describe how the existing group works, and I'll act as organiser while it gets off the ground – although if anything like the existing group, the leader barely gets a word in once the discussion starts.



For our many **GARDENERS**, David and Gwen Byrom have suggested offering a series of outings to visit different local gardens, if sufficient interest. Still very much "watch this space" for this one, as the growing season is still barely started, but we are already starting to take names to see how popular it might be. For now though, you'll just have to keep looking at those seed catalogues and magazines until the world is more back in bloom. But with snowdrops already here, hopefully soon.





Finally, we're organising some extra sessions for **CRYPTIC CROSSWORDS**. Initially this will be six dates, aimed primarily at beginners. For anyone who has ever fancied giving these puzzles a go. Or for those who already dabble, but could use more guidance at recognising the different forms of riddles and tricks that the devious setters use. **At fortnightly intervals starting late February.**

Again I will be leading this one. Suggested slot is Thursday mornings, at Postcode café, but this remains up for discussion. Beyond that hopefully growing into a second group by bringing in some more practiced solvers, as this pastime can be much more fun when done more socially, sharing brainstorming, anecdotes and coffee and snacks.

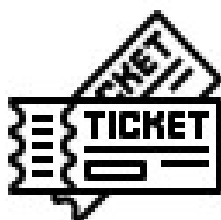
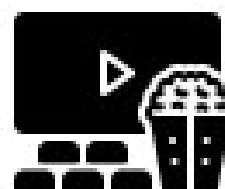
Cinema, MOTO, Bus Pass Explorers ...

Several people have asked also about whatever happened to the Cinema Group? And to the suggestions for some additional social groups – specifically a group purely for 'Members On Their Own' for outings that you might hesitate to do alone, and one for anyone who fancies company to visit places accessible for free with our bus passes.

Same answer in all cases. Members happy to tag along, but waiting in hope that other people would do the organising and come up with the ideas. We've not given up on any of these yet, but do need a bit more enthusiasm and involvement to make it happen.

Basically we need more input, and ideally a bit of group leading too. This is fairly minimal especially when you don't have to collect money or can get a group of people taking it in turns. The only things asked of a leader is to pick the date and place, and be there to take part themselves. (Plenty support is in place for the admin and publicity side of things.)

So, for CINEMA, what we were asking for was film fans who could use some company themselves or who don't mind inviting fellow members along when they pick something they want to see – so that people who hesitate to book tickets alone can meet up with others on the day. We have a couple of volunteers now, but more are still welcome, to cover different types of shows. In the meantime, Omniplex have been changing things around re pricing and giving notice of showtimes, so we'll have more to share on this subject at next members meetings.



And for the other 'outings' ideas, we're still only at early stage of asking what interest there is in setting up these types of activity, collecting names for who wants to be kept informed. A few more names and we'll then get people together to chat about the how and where. Both MOTO and Bus Pass explorers are being offered at an increasing number of other u3a's, where they are proving popular. So let us know if you'd like to see them in Wigan too.

Plus there's still openings in many existing groups.

I'll mention a couple in particular here.



You may have heard Jimmy telling us – just once or twice at members meetings - all about the 'Singing for Fun' group that meets on Tuesday mornings, having a laugh as they learn a wide repertoire of songs and put on occasional performances to entertain us. Lots of existing members in these sessions already, but the more the merrier. Enthusiasm far more important than experience, especially as the group has a tutor to guide and help new starters find where they best fit in.

A special call out also for Table Tennis too. This is one of those groups that does need to hire a specialist venue, with equipment available for use, and David was lucky to be able to secure us St Luke's Church Hall in Orrell with its multiple tables and plenty space. It's a friendly 'bat and chat' format, and a good selection of biscuits too, I'm told. Even if you've not played for ages, players can mix and match by ability, and pick up hints for improving.



The group however does need a minimum attendance to keep costs reasonable, so any new faces or returners will much welcomed to help swell the number of players, and guarantee it can continue. After all, we describe ourselves as 'a youth club for older people' and who ever heard of a youth club that didn't offer Table Tennis?

But as well as the two mentioned above, plenty other options to keep fit or to keep learning. One's still welcoming newcomers include a whole assortment of options:

walks, hill walks, pickleball, line dancing, photography, ten pin bowling, wine appreciation, ancestry, fishing ...

Several other activities have waiting lists and do occasionally have places come free. See the full range on the website [Group List](#) – showing each group's status; and the frequency, day and time of meetings. Link through from there to group pages to be able to contact group leaders if you want more information or to be added to any waiting lists.

And all that of course is in addition to the groups who operate the one-off dates, rather than working to fixed schedules – whose activities you find on our website's [Event Listings](#)

theatre, dining out, trips, social activities, speakers ...

Or maybe you have another passion you wish there *was* a group for, or an opportunity to take up. As always, here please do speak up - Come and have a chat to me or to other committee members with any ideas you have. It's quite likely there could be other like-minded enthusiasts already within the branch who would love to see that too.

Other News

You'll hopefully already have seen a mail from Sue Orrell, our Crafts group leader, for anyone who can knit, quilt/sew or crochet, to take part in jointly contributing to a national charity venture providing blankets to children who find themselves in crisis for all kinds of reasons. If interested in this new way to work together with fellow branch members, there'll be a meeting to find out more in early March. Hoping that there will be a lot of support for this.

Want to know more

If interested in any of the above, you're welcome to mail me – cath.simpson@u3awigan.co.uk.

Or simply reply to the email this update was attached to.

For the new Book Club and Cryptic Crossword groups, check out the notices on the **News Page** on the website for links to get start dates and more details for these.

Alternatively come for a chat at the Activity Group boards next Members Meeting on Wed 19th March, where we'll have sign-up sheets for all the new and potential groups.

As always, more info on our website - <https://wigan.u3asite.uk/>