

Groups Update June 2025

Time for the next newsletter for what's new and pending in our Wigan u3a Branch activity groups.

First however some updates to committee roles since our recent AGM. While the Chair (Sue) and Vice Chair (Jimmy) continue in those roles, we now have a new Treasurer (Elizabeth) and additional new committee members stepping in. At the same time David Byron moves into the role of Group Co-ordinator.

This makes David the person to speak to going forwards if you have ideas for new subjects or any general questions about how groups operate.

You may still see my name appearing in connection with further developing our website and as branch Business secretary; however increasingly it will be David who steers and supports group development and lets everyone know what's on offer.

This, therefore, will be the last group newsletters created by me. Time to say thanks to our hard-working group leaders who have kept me updated on their activities for this and previous newsletters, and to David for giving me lots of new things to share here.

Regards, Cath Simpson (retiring Groups Co-ordinator)



This newsletter is an add-on to information on our Wigan u3a Website – more focussed and detailed, but while newsletters go out of date, the website continually shows latest changes.

The QR link here takes you to the News Page of the site.

Follow the link and set a shortcut on phones etc. to quickly get latest announcements about additions, updates and deadlines. (Ask at meetings for help to add shortcuts.)

<https://wigan.u3asite.uk/news>

Alternately just google 'Wigan u3a' to find the site – and follow the various menu options to view detailed group lists, full events calendar, and all the other parts of the site.

Wigan u3a Website: <https://wigan.u3asite.uk/>

Two New Groups with July Start Dates

Things are moving really fast for the first two new activities on offer.

First, on Tuesday 22nd July – a chance to try the new sport of Padel Tennis.

Sheila Wignall and Christine Spence have negotiated a **free** taster session – (just pay for racquet hire at £2/person).

This is on Tuesday 22nd July at the new Cotton Works venue on the site of the old Eckersley Mills, Swan Meadow Rd, Wigan WN3 5BE. (Heading south from Wigan, alongside Wigan Pier)

This fun, fast-paced racket sport is new to Wigan, and blends tennis and squash, played in doubles on a smaller court with walls. It uses solid, stringless rackets and tennis-style scoring. Easy to learn, sociable and perfect for all ages and skill levels – a fast-growing sport with emphasis on strategy and teamwork.

This runs from 10.30 until 11.30am. The courts are outside, so this will be dependent on the weather. If enough interest, then a new group will follow. To find out more or to reserve a place for Tues 22nd, please contact Sheila Wignall: sheila.wignall@u3awigan.co.uk

More info? See: <https://cotton-works.co.uk/> and <https://www.ltapadel.org.uk/play/>



Then on Wed 23rd July – a First Outing for Garden Visits

A coach trip to Cholmondeley Castle Gardens in Cheshire.



David and Gwen Byron recently asked if there was interest in a garden visits group. The answer was a resounding 'Yes' with over 60 members signing up straight away. So out went the plan of just a few people sharing cars, and in came a plan for more organised trips.

When they contacted this venue, they were offered this date with reduced entry fees plus the extra temptation of a plant sale being held on that date.

Pronounced Chum-lee, this is an RHS Partner Garden - lots on offer from romantic Temple and Folly Water Gardens, Arboretum, Lavinia Walk, ornamental woodland and a new Rose Garden with over 800 new plantings. There is also a tea room in the heart of the garden.

Travel will be by coach, costing £20 for travel and garden entry, subject to there being a good take up of places. See website events list for further information.

Please contact David (david.byron@u3awigan.co.uk) ***as soon as possible*** to reserve your place, and then make payment either at July Members Meeting or by BACS.

More info? <https://cholmondeleycastle.com/>

News and Openings from Existing Groups

A few of our members recently got involved with the **LINUS QUILT PROJECT**. This is a country wide charitable organisation which distributes blankets and quilts made by local volunteers to children's hospitals, hospices, care and foster homes. There are no regular u3a group meetings here, as members work at home at their own pace with advice and guidance available. The photo here shows some of the group's products to date.

More volunteers still welcome though – so this is now added as a formal activity group, with its details and an enquiry link shown on the website Groups page - or just come and sign up at July Members Meeting.

More info? See <https://projectlinusuk.org.uk/>



We're also signing up now for **CRYPTIC CROSSWORD IMPROVERS**. As well as an established Cryptics Group, earlier this year we also ran a Beginners group. Seven meetings to introduce new starters to the various types of sneaky riddles and wordplay they might come across in a cryptic puzzle. By the end they were taking on full grids, some done in solitude at home, but also enjoying brainstorming in café meetings. After a summer break, the group resumes in Autumn with a new name; hopefully adding some more members at that point

So anyone who perhaps knows the basics but would appreciate help, encouragement and sources of gentler puzzles, check out the Cryptics groups page on website, or contact me directly (cath.simpson@u3awigan.co.uk). The website also has the Beginners Guide Notes as downloadable pdf's – which could be a perfect catch up or refresher on technique and jargon for anyone considering jumping in when the next group starts.

Meanwhile our **SECOND BOOK CLUB** is up to its sixth monthly meeting and quickly developing its own identity and style. It runs completely separately from the original group, but with the same informal round table format. Lots of enthusiasm and input from our current members, however we can still fit in a few extra seats. See website for upcoming book selections and enquiry link, or again contact cath.simpson@u3awigan.co.uk

Plus Suggested New Groups?

Sign-up sheets for these at the July Members Meeting, but if not able to be there in person contact david.byron@u3awigan.co.uk to be kept informed.

First a shout-out for a new **PHILOSOPHY GROUP**. “For those who love wisdom, asking fundamental questions about existence, knowledge, mind, language, value and reason – ones that our politicians never seem to ask. We’ll learn what others asking similar questions have said on these matters over the last 2500 years, where we might have made some progress and where we definitely haven’t. Brush up on your ‘-isms’, like Empiricism, Relativism, Existentialism, Stoicism, Utilitarianism and more.” If you would like to join this group, register your interest and what topics you’d love to get wise about!

Two other proposals: a **WHISKY APPRECIATION GROUP** – having occasional meetings at a local micropub with an unusually varied collections of malts, bourbons and more, or further afield, to give the opportunity to sample some different tastes, and learn more about their sources; and a **BUCKET LIST CLUB** – brainstorming and selecting the kind of activities you might always wanted to try – driving a tank, taking part in a robot wars session, herding sheep, whatever – anything bar the really expensive, unfeasible or downright dangerous - to try to organise maybe one or two activities per year.

We are also looking again at our **GARDENING** offerings – especially after seeing the response to the Garden Visits group. We currently have a small discussion group, which has recently had a few spaces opening up, however if we have lots of interest could look at finding a different format and leader for a possible second group. Sign up to join this discussion.

Plus other groups already proposed, but still under discussion: **MEMBERS ON THEIR OWN, BUS PASS WARRIORS, CINEMA....** all things we believe could add to our range.

Additionally we see many other groups run by other u3a’s – locally or further afield.

Perhaps some of these are activities you hoped you would find at Wigan, or maybe even are ones where you have sufficient enthusiasm to consider helping develop them here. In that case, our group co-ordinator really does want to hear from you.

For a guide to subjects that succeed in other branches, the national u3a has a summary site - at: <https://siteworks.u3a.org.uk/oversights/>. Some great food for thought here, as well as some quite surprising statistics on what are the more popular subjects.

HOPING YOU FOUND SOMETHING OF INTEREST IN THESE PAGES. AND THAT WE HEAR BACK FROM YOU WITH BOOKINGS, SIGN-UPS, QUERIES AND IDEAS.