

u3a High Lane

Newsletter

February 2025



Inside this month

From the Editor

From the Chair

Group activities

North West regional Summer School

u3a National events

FROM THE CHAIR

Sorry we cancelled January's meeting which was due to the terrible weather. The path up to the village hall from the car park was very slippery and dangerous. I think if the meeting had gone ahead, we would have spent the afternoon filling in accident forms. I hope we managed to contact everyone either by email or telephone to let you know. If you were missed, sorry.

February's meeting is the AGM and time to renew your membership. Our membership fee is one of the lowest in the country at £8 or £12 if you opt for the magazine as well. If anyone would like to join the committee, please make sure you hand the form in before the meeting. We can always do with extra help to organise different activities.

GROUP LEADERS.

CAN YOU ALL PLEASE WRITE YOUR USUAL REPORT FOR THE AGM.

This can be very brief; just outline what your group did over the last year. Please bring the report or send it with a group member to the meeting or send it to the Secretary. It keeps everyone informed how the groups are doing.

Thanks
Paul (Chair)

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the February 2025 edition of the High Lane u3a newsletter. Thanks to the contributors for their interesting and informative contributions. Some groups were unable to have their usual meeting thanks to the weather. I've raided the archives for this month's cover photo – we have a selection of group activities from ten years ago.

Please remember this is your newsletter and I'm always happy to hear from our members. We are pleased to have several new members this month. We welcome you to our u3a and look forward to meeting you at our meetings and interest groups. Your contributions to the newsletter will be very welcome.

Regarding National u3a information, the newsletter is accompanied by the National Office bitesize Friends newsletter for January. The full version is available [here](#). Information about the North West summer school is on page 12.

The next issue of the newsletter will be March 2025 so please send your contributions to me by 28th February 2025 at newslettereditor@highlaneu3a.org.uk

Diane Saxon

GROUP NEWS

ART

The Art group finished off 2024 with a busy December!

On the 5th we had another workshop with Jeremy Ford but this time it was an owl in Watercolours. Being December it was a small turnout with various bugs around. However, it enabled Jeremy to give more individual support which people appreciated. Also Paul Kenneth popped in to see if he might fancy joining the group after trying out some Art on a cruise!



We also had our first Christmas party on the 19th, with a buffet from Reflections and an Art based Christmas quiz, which we all enjoyed very much.

In 2025 we will be holding our Annual exhibition on Saturday 22nd February, 10am–4pm in the Village Hall where you will be able to view our work from 2024 and enjoy some refreshments and a chat with the group members. We hope to see as many U3A members as possible join us.

We're also planning to have more workshops during 2025 to encourage us all to spread our wings from our comfort zones.

If anyone would like to join the group, please get in touch as we have some availability now.

Madeleine Hennessy

BALLROOM DANCING

The group restarted in mid-January with a good crowd of 18, enhanced by a new couple Ian and Eddie. The choice of music and dances seemed to go down very well, so the afternoon augured well for the 2025 season.

Walter Mason

CHURCHES AND PUBS

A warm welcome was had at St Christopher's Church, Pott Shrigley as unusually after welcome refreshments we had a short service before given a brief history of the church with interesting connections to the Legh family of Shrigley and Lyme Hall.

St Christopher's Church, Pott Shrigley



St Christopher's, centrally situated in the pretty Cheshire village, was founded in the 15th Century constructed in local millstone grit and completed in its present form by Geoffrey Downes and is a classical

perpendicular style with a striking late 15th century barrel roof, Church barrel roof hi-res stock photography and images – Alamy with oak box pews later installed in the 19th century acquired from St. James's Church, Gawsforth.



Along with medieval carvings, there is a fascinating representation of the famous "Alice in Wonderland Cheshire Cat" and a preaching cross can be located in the churchyard which predates the church.

After a very pleasant friendly visit we made our way to the John Millington in Cheadle Hulme for our eagerly awaited Festive meal which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Pam Cooke

CURRENT AFFAIRS

The first topic was the opening of Sainsbury new store on Buxton Road and if it was felt to be a useful addition to the village. It was noted that the size of the car park did not seem to be large, and a big part was taken up for the charging of electric vehicles. The smaller local shops were usually more expensive than the larger stores, but this would be competition to the Spar shop. The main concern was about the increase in traffic. It was felt that there may be difficulty in turning out to the right.

The announcements by President-elect Donald Trump in the last few weeks have shown how he uses his position of power. It was felt that he is unpredictable and some of his pronouncements inappropriate as in the devastating fires in Los Angeles. He proposes to end birthright citizenship which would end the right for people born in the US to claim American citizenship.

It was felt that the position given to Elon Musk who as owner of 'X' and now as co-leader in the US Department of Government Efficiency allows a private citizen to unprecedented power. It was thought that his recent remarks about Sir Kier Starmer, Jess Phillips a Labour MP, and Tommy Robinson a previous British National Party member, showed a lack of knowledge of the subjects he was speaking about and an unwelcome forage into British politics.

Many of the Postmasters who were affected by the Horizon IT scandal are still awaiting compensation. Approximately £289 million has been paid over to 2,800 claimants across four schemes as of 30 August 2024 which includes interim payments. The compensation will include non-pecuniary loss which includes physical and emotional pain and distress. This will take time to calculate the additional damages but some of the claimants are elderly or have since died. Some have already turned down their offer so this will be a lengthy process.

The new weight loss medication which is considered too high a cost for the NHS for everyone who would benefit to be given access. It is based on BMI (Body Mass Index) not just if a person is obese. NHS has on numerous occasions advised the benefits of healthy eating and exercise which can lead to improvement to the condition of diabetes. It may be that a reset is necessary to address the growing fastfood intake. It has been noted that some of the food banks which offer fresh vegetables have found these have not been taken up.

The Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, gave a speech supporting AI (Artificial Intelligence) which could increase government efficiency, enhance staff training, speed up benefit payments and modernise communication systems. AI is in the pilot and trial stages for many other uses and as this will be a powerful tool there is a downside for fear of disinformation.

Our thanks to Margaret for her hospitality.

Paulene Whyte

CRIME FICTION READING

As the ground was still covered in snow and ice, we held our January meeting using Zoom – unwelcome reminders of lockdown. The book we were discussing was *The Last Widow*, published in 2019 by Karin Slaughter. The book didn't score well. It was felt to be too American, too many acronyms, too much bad language, and too violent, resulting inevitably in many dead bodies. The baddies were ex-military, well-trained, and extremely well organised. They hated authority, despised any sort of government, and had clear disdain for women and non-white people. They effectively considered themselves superior. We thought the story didn't really start until about halfway through the book but by then we thoroughly disliked these characters and what they stood for.

Our next meeting is Thursday 9th February 2025. For this meeting we are reading *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett, a 1930s novel set in San Francisco featuring the PI Sam Spade. Hopefully this will be a more rewarding read.

We have space for a few more members. Our normal meeting time is 10am on the second Friday of the month. Do get in touch if you are interested in joining us.

Diane Saxon

DINING

The Dining Group is starting another year of sociable lunches with a return visit to The Bulls Head in Hazel Grove.

When we were there last year, we had an excellent 3 course lunch for the ridiculous price of £12. 50, gratuity included, I am afraid this year it will cost you more £13!

Due to the bad weather in January the U3A monthly meeting on the 8th had to be cancelled, this means if you want to join us on the 18th you will have to register at the February meeting (12th). If you are unable to attend and would like to join us, contact us and we will be happy to help.

Dorothy Gerard
Dorothy Neillands

GARDENING

No meeting as yet, but suggestions have been circulated of possible snowdrop gardens available to visit. Not many close at hand unfortunately.

Gardens are reawakening after the stormy spell, as a snowdrop clump and early camellia testify.



Walter Mason

GERMAN

The German group has not yet met as a whole this year so far because of bad weather and illness. Our numbers are depleted as two longstanding members of the group have moved south to be nearer their families, but, however small we are, we shall continue to meet on Friday mornings.

Marlene Brookes

MEMOIRS

Unfortunately, the last meeting of the Memoirs group in January had to be cancelled due to heavy snow. Our next meeting is on Tuesday, 4th February at 2pm in the small hall. If anyone is interested in joining the group, please let me know.

QUOTE FOR THE MONTH

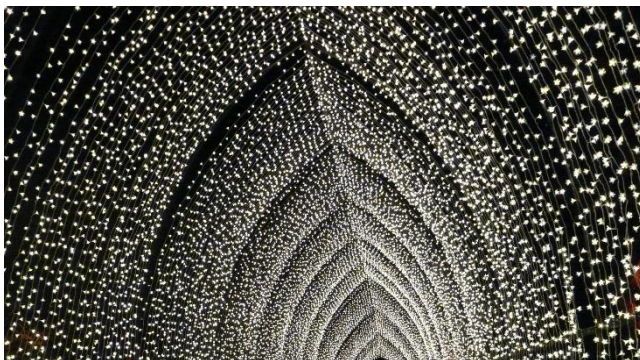
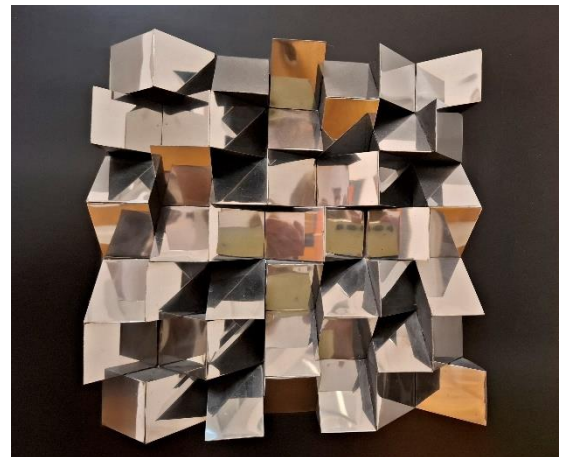
It's not what we have in life but who we have in our life that matters.

Margaret Laurence

Barbara Kenneth

PHOTOGRAPHY

The photography group kicked off the new year with their regular monthly competition. The theme was "PATTERN", and we had some interesting interpretations on it. First place went to Tony with 9 points, Diamonds in the sky. 2nd placed was Diane's Art pattern with 6 points, and joint third were Walters's Light tunnel and Diane's Living Patterns, both with 4 points. Well done everybody.



February's topic is "CLOCKS".

Please send in your photos (max three) by 27th February.

Thank you

Ken Jackson

QUIZZING



We were fortunate that the snow and ice had cleared, and we were able to meet to tackle Monica's quiz which we all enjoyed. We had a round of Christmas questions followed by Davids, national airlines, Booker prize winners and much more.

Here are a few for you to try:

1. Name the Three Wise Men
2. What gift was received on the 8th day of Christmas?
3. Which David wrote the children's book Gangster Granny?
4. Which is the largest country by area?
5. How many cantons is Switzerland divided into?
6. Where did Clark Kent work?

Know the answers? Fancy challenging yourself with us? New quizzers are very welcome. More members would be useful to help us build our teams. We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month. Meetings always have a relaxed and sociable environment. You can be assured of a friendly welcome.

Please contact me if you would like to join this group or would like more information.

Diane Saxon

READING

We had a good turn out on 6th January despite the weather. Our book of the month was THE GRAPES OF WRATH by John Steinbeck which told the story of the Judd family of Oklahoma, forced off their land, who optimistically set off for the promised paradise of California, only to face prejudice and rejection. This led to a very lively discussion, including comparisons with today regarding attitudes to migrants. It is hard to believe that there could be so much injustice and suffering in what was, and is, the richest country in the world. We were then treated to some music by Woodie Guthrie inspired by the novel and the events of the Depression.

Our next meeting is on Monday, 3rd February when we will be discussing GUERNICA by Dave Boling which deals with the effect of the Spanish Civil War on the Basque people.

Marlene Brookes

TRAVEL



| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Kings Lynn | April 11 th -14 th Balance at February meeting. |
| Isle of Wight | Cancelled because of insufficient interest. |
| NE England/ Durham | July 6 th -11 th Deposit at February meeting. |
| Ireland | August/September |

Margaret McDermott

SHORT WALKS

High Lane U3A Short walks Group – January 2025

Starting our January walk at Pear Mill, one mile from Stockport centre. A surprising walk for 12 folk. Following a walking/cycle track from the mill we came to the bridge across the river Goyt. Continuing along the riverside until reaching the weir and the information board telling us that we were entering Woodbank Park.

Ascending steps took us to the back of Woodbank Hall and from here (where races were taking place) having to take a diversion through the park came to a pond with different species of ducks. After our coffee stop, the group was taken through woods and across the main drive downward to Vernon Park, seeing the bandstand and experiencing the maze of box trees. A short walk along the main road turning into Pear Mill and the car park.

Thank you, Agnes, for a ‘surprise’ walk.

The next walk is Saturday February 15th. If interested, please contact me for details.

Ruth Smith



WALKING

29/01/25 Whaley Bridge, Toddbrook Valley, Sponds Hill, Bowstonegate, Moorside.

This five mile walk provided much variety and contrast covering undulating terrain with stunning spectacular views throughout.

Fourteen walking group members met at Slatersbank Farm, Whaley Bridge on this surprisingly favourable January day and thoroughly enjoyed this walk, blessed with fine, bright, mainly sunny conditions, along with a light but cool breeze. It was a delight to be out and about in fabulous everchanging countryside – passing through several farms – ancient footpaths – fascinating low-level sheltered woodland – high-level open grassland – 360 degree views stretching to a distant horizon – all in the Toddbrook catchment area.



We took our coffee break on an ancient track prior to climbing up to Sponds Hill where we scanned the far-reaching vistas, before having a picnic lunch, in the lee of a stone wall to provide shelter from the chill in the breeze.

After lunch we left the highest point on the walk and passed Bowstonegate and the former Moorside Hotel and followed our circulate route home, descending through mellow countryside back to the known world, ending the adventure at Slatersbank Farm.

We all enjoyed the scope and variety of the walk and were thankful that the benign weather conditions enhanced the experience – a very good day to remember!



David Burke

NORTH WEST REGION SUMMER SCHOOL August 2025

North West Region of U3As



Registered Charity No: 1159001

invite applications for the 2025 Summer School

Residential Summer School Tues 12th August – Friday 15th August At Manchester Metropolitan University, M15 6GX

The Metropolitan University is located in the centre of Manchester and less than 20 minutes' walk from Oxford Road Railway Station. The campus has modern facilities, student en-suite rooms with Wi-Fi access. There will be a quiz on the first evening and a "Gala Dinner" on the third and final evening. Speakers will also attend on the second and third evening.

Full Board Residential Delegate; £430. (+£10 car parking charge if applicable; +£25 field trips (2 off) surcharge for archaeology, and £15 field trip surcharge for British artists courses) We include full board for 3 nights, including dinner on 12th August, breakfast, lunch and dinner on 13th August, breakfast, lunch and gala dinner on 14th August, and breakfast on 15th August. Also, tea and coffee refreshments on each day.

Non-Residential Day Delegate: £215 (+parking and field trip surcharge if applicable) includes lunches, teas and coffees, excludes breakfast daily and dinner on Tuesday and Wednesday but does include the gala dinner on 14th August. Accommodation is available nearby in the Manchester city centre.

An Application form (available online at northwestregion.u3asite.uk) must be completed by post or email, Payment can be either by bank transfer (North West Region of U3A's, Lloyds Bank sort code 30-90-16, account 00197002 quoting name and post code) or by cheque (payable to North West Region of U3A's)

£100 DEPOSIT (£50 non residents) PAYABLE UPON APPLICATION; BALANCE BY 12 MAY 2025

queries should be directed to Alan Hough on 07544 359125 or

alanhough1949@gmail.com

Post to 8 Salwick Close, Wigan, Gtr Manchester. WN3 6RE

The 8 courses on offer are:-

Archaeology: "Magical Minerals and Twisted Yarns";

Introduction to Ancient Egypt;

Literature: "I have something to say" (Gaskell, Spring, Winterson)

Art Appreciation: "A Pot- Pourri"

Art challenges: "Significance of Colour"

Uzbekistan: Heart of the Silk Road

Folk Music

Intermediary Ukulele

Full course synopses available separately (and on north west site).

National Office Learning Events for February

Some highlights you might want to book. Remember they can fill up quickly.

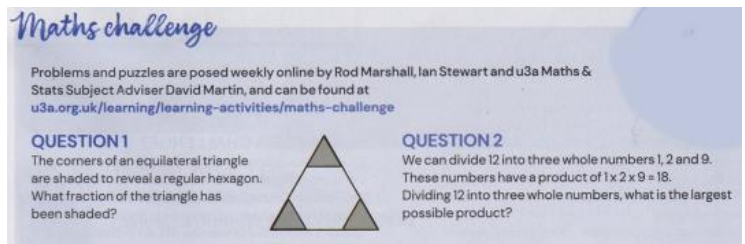
- 3 Feb Online Workshop: An introduction to starting a yoga group in your u3a
- 7 Feb Sociology, Gender Inequality and Feminism
- 14 Feb Claude Monet's Garden in Giverny
- 18 Feb Things you didn't know you could do online, for older people
- 20 Feb Mindfulness and Meditation Continuation Session
- 26 Feb Penguins: Icons of Antarctica
- 28 Feb Philosophy as a way of life
- 3 Mar The Lifecycle of a Laser: From Prototype to Making Stars on Earth
- 4 Mar Apps to help seniors being out and about: A travel focus journey

There are many other events. All are free via Zoom. Click here for details and to book a place. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

Answers to last month's Maths Challenge

Question 1: dividing the equilateral triangle into nine smaller equilateral triangles, we can see that the fraction of the triangle that has been shaded is $\frac{3}{9} = \frac{1}{3}$

Question 2: dividing 12 into 4, 4 and 4 gives the largest product of 64.



From u3a Matters Winter 2024

And the Bridge hand from last month

What contract did you come up with and did you think you would make it? You can see a laydown 13 tricks but how to get there.

South has a three loser hand but is not good enough to open 2C so will open 1C.

N should respond 1H even though it's a poor suit. Not bidding H denies a four card H suit. East will bid 2D.

S will then bid 2 or 3S. North will support the spades.

S should then take control and bid 6S. You can't bid Blackwood because of the singleton and void.

| | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Board 15 Dealer S NS Vul | ♠ QJ86 | ♠ 102 |
| | ♥ 7652 | ♥ AQ8 |
| | ♦ KJ3 | ♦ AQ97652 |
| | ♣ K2 | ♣ 7 |
| ♠ 74 | ♠ AK953 | |
| ♥ KJ1094 | ♥ 3 | |
| ♦ 1084 | ♦ - | |
| ♣ J108 | ♣ AQ96543 | |

All who played this hand on our evening duplicate ended up in 4S and made 4S+2. Another slam missed!