



Newsletter

January 2025



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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the January 2025 edition of the High Lane u3a newsletter. Thanks to all the contributors for their interesting and informative contributions. The cover photo this month highlights some of our group activities from this year. We hope you enjoyed these.



Waking up this morning, maybe not the best start to the New year. The overnight rainfall of three inches outed the power in many areas including ours but we now have power again and I can get the newsletter finished!

In this edition, the Chair's message on the next page reminds us that offers of help to run our u3a are very welcome. The current committee has remained much the same for some years. The ethos of u3a is that we are a self-group group; members play an active part in running their local u3a and the activities. Also, in this edition you will find a report of the recent Christmas party, reports from groups plus our annual Quiz of the Year where you can look back at the events of 2024 and delve into your memories. We also have advance notice of the regional summer school which is in Manchester this year. This normally gets booked up quickly so do get your booking in early if you wish to attend.

Please remember this is your newsletter and I'm always happy to hear from our members. Please feel free to share some of your news, your interests, or items you have found that you think would be of interest to other members. This could be places you have visited, books you have read, films you have seen; your stories, anecdotes, photographs, recipes, limericks, jokes; the list is endless.

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 December. The full version is available [here](#). There is also a festive edition of the Friends u3a Newsletter available [here](#) for you to read. This contains a message from the newly appointed Chair of the Third Age Trust, Iain Cassidy, plus festive stories from across the u3a community, anecdotes about members' traditions, and some puzzles to enjoy. Information about the North West summer school is on page 18.

The next issue of the newsletter will be February 2025 so please send your contributions to me by 30th January 2025 at newslettereditor@highlaneu3a.org.uk

Diane Saxon

FROM THE CHAIR

Hope you all had an enjoyable Christmas, and I wish everyone a Happy and prosperous New Year.



We ended 2024 with a well-attended Christmas party. Rodger Browne from Manchester Jazz entertained us and the buffet was provided by Reflections. A really good end to the year.

Looking forward to 2025 your committee has been planning events and to date we have:

March 19 th	Open day. New members, group leaders and refreshments.
July 18 th	Annual lunch
August 22 nd	Quiz evening

There will also be one or two holidays. A River cruise and the usual trip to Ireland.

We hope to add to this list and any ideas are most welcome. The list of speakers for 2025 looks interesting. Thanks to Lynn for organising this.

February is the AGM and if anyone would like to join us on the committee, please make sure you fill in your forms before the AGM.

Once again, a big thanks to all the committee for what they have done for our u3a in the last year.

Happy New Year.

Paul (Chair)

NEW GROUPS

Groups are the lifeblood of the u3a, and we are always looking for ideas for new groups. Ken Jackson who currently runs the Backgammon and Photography groups has offered to help with starting a Guitar group. He suggests starting with a basic beginner's course. If you are interested in getting this group going, please get in touch with Ken.

We would welcome ideas for other new groups – please talk to a committee member.

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2024

Intrepid as usual, Freda and I attended the High Lane u3a Christmas Party. Ring and Ride got us there in good time, although the vehicle had some difficulty manoeuvring in the congested car park.

We enjoyed the eats, and especially Roger Browne's entertaining talk. There was plenty of interest in the accounts of Cole Porter, George Gershwin, and the early days of sheet music. Roger's keyboard playing was a little thumpy for my taste, but it seemed to go down well with the audience; and he finished off with some apt Christmas songs for Sing-a Long.



All in all, a very pleasant afternoon – until We knew Ring and Ride were short staffed so couldn't take us back. Then a pre-booked wheelchair taxi didn't arrive. Not booked they said – nonsense! So panic stations for Freda and I. Walk to

the A6 and 199 bus to Hazel Grove, with wheelchair push up to Torkington, was not inviting after a previous experience in the dark. Then Trevor from the committee came to the rescue, and with difficulty we managed to get Freda in a car for a lift home. That wasn't the end of it, as Trevor got the short straw. Road works in Hazel Grove had left the A6 and Torkington Road at a near standstill, and a 10-minute journey turned into a one hour stop start crawl., with Trevor still to get back to High Lane. So we're deeply indebted to Trevor, and left wondering what the Plan B is for future trips out. Perils of old age!

Walter Mason

The first monthly meeting of 2025 is on 8th January when Colin Mail will give a talk entitled 'Lyme: Science & Superstition, Leeches and Leghs.'

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership is now due for renewal. Renewals will be accepted at the January meeting and at the February AGM. Our membership fee remains low in comparison with other u3as. This year you will only need to complete a renewal form if there are any changes to your contact details.

As stated in the Treasurer's message in the previous newsletter, the membership fee for 2025 is £8, or £12 if you also wish to order the u3a Matters Magazine. Your extra £4 is also good value – this gets you the next five issues of the magazine posted to your door, containing many items of interest to u3a members.



AGM

The AGM will take place in February. We will need nominations for members wishing to serve on the Committee. A nomination form is on the last page of the newsletter, or one can be obtained from the Secretary, Lynn Arnold. Offers of help are always very welcome.

If you know of any member who would be interested in helping to run our u3a please suggest they get in touch with a committee member who can tell them more about what is involved. If you wish to be nominated, please complete the form, get it signed, and return it to the Secretary, Lynn Arnold, by the January meeting.

GROUP LEADERS

Please would group leaders prepare a report on last year's activities for the AGM. If you cannot attend, please ask someone in your group to read the report or send a copy to Lynn Arnold.

Please would you also check your group's webpage on the website to make sure that the information is up to date and correct. You might want to place all or part of your AGM report on the group's page for the benefit of prospective members. Please send your changes to the webmaster, Jeff Mortimer at webmaster@highlaneu3a.org.uk

GROUP NEWS

BACKGAMMON

The backgammon group continues happily every other Wednesday afternoon in the Bull's Head, High Lane with between 4 and 10 members attending. New players of any standard are welcome to come along, and new players will be taught the game from scratch.

The first session in 2025 will most likely be on January 15th.

Ken Jackson

BALLROOM DANCING

The group has had a good year, and in mid-December had its traditional Christmas Party. Plenty of Christmassy music for ballroom and sequence alike; even a fun dance or two. Not all the dancing was up to "Strictly" standards – in one or two dances a wheelchair was observed rhythmically dodging the more agile couples! As usual we finished with a splendid buffet. Plenty to go round even for the ones with healthier appetites.

We will always welcome some new younger blood into the group. Too many diamond weddingites among our number perhaps – four couples at last count! But 2025 is looking good.

Particular thanks to Kate and Ian, who share the DJ-ing with me, and to Steve who looks after the money side of things.

Walter Mason



MONDAY BRIDGE

We are pleased to see that our numbers are recovering at last. It has taken a long time since Covid, but we are now back to seven tables most weeks. In the week before Christmas, we had our first Christmas party since lockdown where we played Chicago bridge instead of our normal Duplicate pairs, accompanied by a glass of wine, Christmas cake and chocolates. Prizes were awarded for first and second, lowest negative and closest to zero with spot prizes for each round. Congratulations to the winners.

Normal sessions start again on Monday, 6th January.

In the meantime, you might like to have a think about this one? What would the contract be and how many tricks do you think you can make?

Board 15
Dealer S
NS Vul

♠ QJ86
♥ 7652
♦ KJ3
♣ K2

♠ 74
♥ KJ1094
♦ 1084
♣ J108

♠ AK953
♥ 3
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♣ AQ96543

♠ 102
♥ AQ8
♦ AQ97652
♣ 7

CHURCHES AND PUBS

The Churches and Pubs group continues to flourish. We had five visits last year, Monyash, New Mills, Disley, Taxal and Pott Shrigley.

We are hoping to continue in 2025 and have three visits lined up. If anyone would like to organise a visit to a church, then a pub for lunch just get in touch with me. There is always plenty of help and advice.

Thanks

Paul Kenneth

CRIME FICTION READING

This year we have read 12 books and been pleased to have a good variety of styles and approaches. It is rare that we all like the same book and for some books there have been quite wide variations in our views – which, of course, is great. We have discovered some authors who were new to most of us and revisited some doyens of the genre.

Our top scorer this year was *The Rising Tide*, one of the Vera series written by Ann Cleeves in 2022. Second was *The Crossing Places* Elly Griffiths, published in 2009, the first book in the DI Ruth Galloway series.

Our book for December was *Trouble in the Cotswolds* by Rebecca Tope. Tope is a prolific writer, having written some 40 crime novels in print. Her two main series are set in the Cotswolds and the Lake District, and both feature amateur female detectives. The Cotswold series comprises 18 books and the 19th will be published shortly. *Trouble in the Cotswolds* is the 12th book in the series.

Thea Osborne, the female sleuth, and her dog, are house-sitting in a Cotswold village while the family is away for Christmas. Her responsibilities in the house include the care of several rats which she is supposed to allow out of the cage for exercise. Her arrival in the village coincides with the funeral of a local businessman Douglas Callendar, who was found electrocuted in his bath. This is closely followed by a second murder when another villager is discovered brutally murdered the following day. Thea is supposedly helping the police solve the crimes whilst suffering from a range of problems including a bad bout of flu, being without transport as she put the wrong fuel in her car and trying without much success to manage the housesitting. None of us liked this book. Thea was considered whinging, self-centred and it all got a bit boring. Not surprisingly, the book garnered the lowest score by far of any of our books since the group started in 2022.

Our next meeting is Thursday 9th January 2025. For this meeting we are reading *The Last Widow* by Karin Slaughter.

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

Diane Saxon

CURRENT AFFAIRS

December 3rd

We discussed the Assisted Dying Bill which passed the first stage on a free vote in the House of Commons by a majority of 330 to 275. It will have another vote next year, then go to the House of Lords and may become legal in about two years. Some of the group were quite hesitant about it but eventually agreed that it was preferable to a long lingering painful death provided that adequate safeguards were put in place to prevent coercion.

There seems to be a large increase in the number of allegations of abuse by Mohamed al Fayed, Greg Wallace and John Smyth amongst others. The Archbishop of Canterbury resigned recently because although he knew about Smyth ten years earlier, he had not pursued the matter. We thought that many people who get into positions of power feel that they are above the law and can do as they like. Many young girls have reported abuse to the police, but it has not been followed up for many years because of lack of evidence.

The BBC licence fee is to increase to £147.50 next April. The fee funds much of the BBC's operation but many people are not paying the fee and accessing news, TV and radio in other ways. Its services are renowned for children's education, world class entertainment, news items and the world service which we all thought must continue. However, we considered that some people working for the BBC were paid far too much; Gary Lineker being a prime example.

We thought that the resignation of the Secretary of State for Transport, Louise Haigh, was unnecessary as she seemed to be making good progress. We liked her red hair!

Apparently, the Government is proposing that young people who are not in education or training and refuse to work will lose benefits. There are about 900,000 not working because of mental health issues or other disabilities. Job centres are to be overhauled so that there is more support. In some cases, jobs available were worth less than the benefit paid. We all agreed that as there is a shortage of workers in various industries more skills training and apprenticeships are needed.

There is room for one or two more people in the group. Do come along and try us for interesting conversation and discussion.

Margaret McDermott

DINING

Our Christmas lunch at The Hanging Gate was our last meeting for 2024. At this time of the year, it is an ideal place for a party as it is renowned for its decorations. What a show it was with over 7000 baubles and 35000 lights. We were promised a meal with entertainment, and we were not disappointed.

During our meal we were entertained by a lady pianist. Later we played Bingo and one of our ladies won a prize, well done. Afterwards we had a Christmas quiz, lots of near misses but unfortunately no winners. The afternoon ended with a sing song.

The Dining Group meets for lunch alternate months, is well supported and is open to all members. This year we have visited The Bulls Head, in Hazel Grove, The Aviator in Woodford, The Rams Head Disley, Devonshire Arms in Mellor, Miller & Carter in Heaton Moor and The Hanging Gate.

February 2025 will be our next outing; the venue will be on show at the January meeting, and we look forward to seeing you there.

Dorothy Gerrard
Dorothy Neillands

KURLING

The Kurling group continues to meet after the monthly u3a Wednesday meeting. We have a steady turn out of a dozen or so members and an enjoyable hour plus is enjoyed by all. Nothing to serious. Why not try it.

Paul Kenneth

TRAVEL

Kings Lynn	April 11 th -14 th Balance at January meeting.
Isle of Wight	July 7 th – 13 th
Ireland	August/September



Margaret McDermott

MEMOIRS

December meeting (number 59)

We only had three readings as we were having a Xmas party.

The first reading finished off an account about his father, a man who could turn his hand to anything. It was very moving and humorous and a lovely tribute to an ordinary man.

The second was about celebrating Christmas and New Year in Norway, and the differences between the way we celebrate it from them.

The final one was about happy childhood holidays spent in the Isle of Man. When the family came to Cheadle, he hated having to go to nursery. Scouting was one of his happiest times and he is still in touch with many friends from those days.

After the readings we remembered Sheila Harrop who died almost twelve months ago to the day from our meeting. Sheila started the group over five years ago and was ably helped by Barbara Speake. After originally only thinking that she was only coming to a few meetings, Barbara stayed, and her help and advice were invaluable. Sadly, Barbara has decided to finish her time with us. We are so grateful to her, and she will be greatly missed. She is always welcome to pop in to see us and we hope that she will.

Barbara S then presented a beautiful quilt that she had made to Barbara Kenneth as a thank you for keeping the group going following Sheila's death. Barbara K then gave Barbara S a Bag from Lakeland and also a Christmas cactus from the group with a signed card.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 7th January in the small hall.

Quote for the month

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.

Robert Louis Stevenson

I would like to thank Diane Saxon for her reminders for everyone to send in their group reports every month.

Barbara Kenneth

PHOTOGRAPHY

As a group, we don't have meetings or group nights. It is run as a monthly photo competition, where each member submits three pictures, online, of their own, based on a different theme. We all then vote on our favourite three pictures (no voting for your own photos), and we have a winner. No prizes, just the satisfaction of having your picture voted in.

It is not a highly technical camera functions set up, most pics are probably coming from mobile phones, so no exceptional skills are needed. If you would like to join in and send your pictures in, please do so via my contact on the u3a site. New members would be very welcome.

Here are the results for the December Chocolate competition.

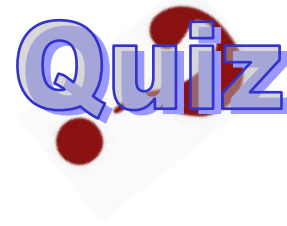
- 1st ... Calorific bear, 7 points, Barbara
 - 2nd...Chocolate selection, 6 points, Ken
 - 3rd ...Birthday Chocolate cake, 4 points, Diane.
- Well done, Barbara.



Thanks for all the entries. We don't have a topic yet for January, but we will decide one when we meet up to devise this year's programme. Enjoy the festive season, see you in the New Year.

Ken Jackson

QUIZZING



Quiz of the Year

How well do you remember 2024?

Answers are on the last page of the newsletter.

January	In which country did the world's last reigning queen abdicate at the age of 83?
February	Who won the Rochdale by election for the Workers Party of Britain?
March	Who was re-elected with 87.8% of the vote?
April	The UK's largest indoor arena seating 23,500 and costing £365m to build opened this month. What is its name?
May	Who got tearful during the inquiry into the Horizon IT scandal?
June	Who was awarded a \$46 billion pay deal?
July	Who did England lose to in the Euro2024 final?
August	Which band announced a reunion tour of Britain and Ireland, 16 years after their acrimonious split?
September	Which Dame died this month?
October	Who published a book called Unleashed this month?
November	Who resigned after allegations of misconduct?
December	What reopened after a major fire in 2019?

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

SHORT WALKS

Our next walk is Saturday 18 January, from Pear Mill, Stockport. A park walk. Meet 09.30 hrs High Lane Village Hall Car Park or 10.00 hrs at Pear Mill.

Ruth Smith

WALKING

Our December walk was a combination of members of the Walking Group and the Short Walks Group.

Despite the strong wind with threat of rain the group set off from the Navigation in Buxworth (originally a farm) in good



Christmas spirits. Pausing for a brief description of the surrounding history, Bugsworth Basin was constructed in 1795 and the busiest inland port linking the limestone quarries in Derbyshire to Manchester and trans Pennine canal network. Passing the replica horse transfer bridges and the former Wharfinger's house (Wharfinger – basin manager) walking along the canal tow path to cross the footbridge, following the tow path into Whaley Bridge Basin. From the basin crossing over river where rail tracks can still be seen to ascend gently the incline, at the top of the incline some members shared their knowledge of the turning circle. Descending to walk under the elaborately decorated railway bridge, along the road into the Memorial Park (created in 1920) passing by the (still under repair) dam onto Reservoir Road down to the basin.

Nearly all the group were enthusiastic to 'do the short steep path' up to Bings Farmhouse and barn (Grade 11 listed building) stopping 'to take in the views en route'. Here the group spotted reindeer!! Where was Santa? Descending down the road passing Silkhill Farm with clear views, we soon crossed over the bypass and back to the Navigation Pub for 27 folk to have a splendid Christmas Meal.



Ruth Smith
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 the New Year

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


- 7 Jan Tips for online safety and support
- 9 Jan Cryptic crosswords
- 9 Jan Melancholy as a creative force
- 13 Jan Starting a Yoga group in your u3a
- 15 Jan Introduction to duplicate bridge
- 15 Jan 3D printing
- 18 Jan Toulouse–Lautrec
- 21 Jan Secrets of the human brain – how can we age better?
- 21 Jan AI for older people

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>

Maths challenge

Problems and puzzles are posed weekly online by Rod Marshall, Ian Stewart and u3a Maths & Stats Subject Adviser David Martin, and can be found at [u3a.org.uk/learning/learning-activities/maths-challenge](https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/learning-activities/maths-challenge)

QUESTION 1
The corners of an equilateral triangle are shaded to reveal a regular hexagon. What fraction of the triangle has been shaded?



QUESTION 2
We can divide 12 into three whole numbers 1, 2 and 9. These numbers have a product of $1 \times 2 \times 9 = 18$. Dividing 12 into three whole numbers, what is the largest possible product?

From u3a Matters Winter 2024

DID YOU KNOW?

New year customs

In Denmark, people smash old plates and glasses against the doors to ward off bad spirits and show affection.

In Romania, people dress up as bears and dance around to ward off evil and ensure a good harvest.

In Italy, people wear red underwear on New Year's Eve to attract love, luck, and prosperity in the coming year.

In Switzerland, people drop a scoop of ice cream on the floor to symbolize abundance and wealth.

My New Year's resolution is to stop procrastinating...starting tomorrow!

Quiz of the year answers:

Jan: Denmark
Feb: George Galloway
Mar: Vladimir Putin
Apr: Co-op Live
May: Paula Venells
Jun: Elon Musk
Jul: Spain. The score was 2–1
Aug: Oasis
Sep: Dame Maggie Smith
Oct: Boris Johnston
Nov: Gregg Wallace
Dec: Notre Dame, Paris

HIGH LANE u3a

OFFICER AND COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS FOR 2025

The Officers and Committee for 2025 are to be elected at the AGM on 12 February 2025.

If you wish to nominate a member for any of the roles, please complete the form appropriately and return it to the Secretary, Lynn Arnold, by the date of the monthly meeting on 8 January 2025.

Please ensure you have the permission and signature of the person you are nominating.

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	NOMINEE	SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE	NOMINATED BY	SECONDED BY
Chair				
Vice Chair				
Treasurer				
Secretary				
Committee Member				

Note: people nominating and seconding must be members of High Lane u3a and not currently an Officer or Committee member