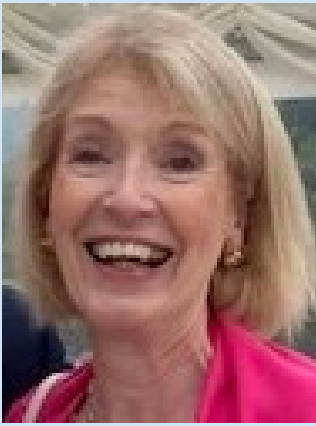




**May 2026 – July 2026**

**Learn  
Laugh  
Live**

**Do Something  
Brilliant Today**



**Christine Garrity**  
North West  
Committee Chair

Please contact through the contact us section of the website

[chair@nwru3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@nwru3a.org.uk)



**Paul King**  
North West  
Newsletter Editor

[editor.nwu3a@gmail.com](mailto:editor.nwu3a@gmail.com)



## Greetings from the Chair

**With blossom on the tress and lighter days, we know that spring is here.**

This of course means that our AGM is nearly upon us. Please don't miss out taking part.

In March I attended an event at the House of Lords. The aim was for representatives from each region to help raise the profile of u3a. Please see the article later in this newsletter.

I attended the AGM of Meols u3a, where it was reported that membership has increased significantly over the last 3 years. I spoke to Zoe, one of the younger members who said

"u3a is an organisation that, at first glance, might appear to be only for older people, or at least for those who have retired. However, I am under retirement age but no longer working and know from personal experience that it is the perfect organisation to join if you are looking to grow your social circle. Since joining, I have made many friends, both at the various groups I attend, and at the monthly meetings, where I have found a warm welcome with no judgment."

**Thank you Zoe for really summing up what we are all about!**

**Christine Garrity**



## Deadline for articles for next edition 6th July 2026

Please note our next newsletter should be in August. We want to highlight the activities of as many of our u3as as possible.

It is always wonderful to see what all our hard working u3as have been up to and it inspires others to try new things. Please forward your articles of around 200 words and a picture to accompany to [editor.nwu3a@gmail.com](mailto:editor.nwu3a@gmail.com).

We really do look forward to seeing all the great things you are getting up to....

**Paul King**  
North West Newsletter Editor

## Regional Website

If you have not already, please do check out our Regional website <https://northwestregion.u3asite.uk/> It contains



information on events, training, information on the u3as in our Region as well as copies of this newsletter



## Do we have your u3as up to date contact details?

The North West Region exists to help and support your u3a – please have your u3a support us by ensuring each time your officers change we know the up-to-date details.

If you have not already in the past few months, please do send us your committee updates to Mark Bradley [webmanager@nwru3a.org.uk](mailto:webmanager@nwru3a.org.uk)

## NW AGM

We are trialling an online vote this year and each u3a has been asked to appoint one voting delegate to act on their behalf. Thank you to those u3as who have already registered a name. If you haven't yet done so, there is still time, as the voting papers will be going out during the second week in May.

We will also send a Zoom link for anyone who would like to hear the ballot results and reports live on Tuesday 23rd June at 11.00.

## Could you volunteer to support the North West Region

We are a small volunteer team seeking new members to help support the Region.

Opportunities include joining the Committee of Management, assisting with training and events, supporting Summer Schools, and offering general help.

If you have skills to offer, please reach out. Support and training are provided. For more information or to discuss volunteering, contact:

**Christine Garrity at [chair@nwru3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@nwru3a.org.uk).**

## Does your website link to our Region and the Trust Website?

Our u3a websites act as a shop window, showcasing events and activities both to current members and to potential new members.

However, it might surprise you to know that over half our North West websites don't include a link to the Regional or the Trust websites.

Please can we ask you to include these links so that members can see what is on offer across the whole u3a community.

**Together we can do more**

## North West Region Summer School

**Tues 11<sup>th</sup> August – Friday 14<sup>th</sup> August**  
**Manchester Metropolitan University,**  
**M15 6GX**

An incredible opportunity for u3a members to come together and learn and develop new skills. If there is one event not to miss it is this one

**The 8 courses on offer are:-**

- **Archaeology Explorers (now full)**
- **Making sense of everyday Mathematics**
- **An introduction to Geology (now full)**
- **Photography – Beyond the Snapshot**
- **Art challenges – the history of colour (now full)**
- **The UK and USA Political Scenes**
- **Operatunity – opera appreciation**
- **Intermediary Ukulele (now full)**

An Application form and further details are available online at

<https://northwestregion.u3asite.uk/summer-school-2026/>

Costs for attending the full school:

Full Board Residential Delegate; £430  
(+£15 parking charge if applicable )

Non-Residential Day Delegate: £215  
(+£15 parking charge if applicable )  
Includes lunches, but only dinner on the gala evening).

## Photography - Beyond the Snapshot

Designed for those who have a basic knowledge of photography and already take photographs on their phone or camera, but who would like to increase their knowledge and improve their practical skills to produce more pleasing results.

There are more photographs being taken today than at any other time in history, but most are mediocre at best and totally forgettable at worst, if not immediately deleted. Digital photography can make us blasé when we don't have to factor in the cost of buying film and having it developed and printed.

Beyond the Snapshot will cover and expand on the basics of photography, including camera settings. meter reading and exposure, lens focal length and aperture, appropriate shutter speed and focussing.



Feeling comfortable with these basics can then be followed by discussions about composition and appreciation of what makes a good photograph.

Bring whatever photo equipment you have with you, even if it is just your phone. There will be handouts,

There will be an opportunity to get out of the classroom and put into practice new skills.

**The course leaders are David Roby and Michael Schofield from Mawdesley Villages u3a. In addition, they are both members of Ormskirk Camera Club**

**The sky is not the limit to knowledge**

## News from the u3as

### Upholland

**Upholland Meets Cranleigh:** We planned a visit for the middle of March to our son and his family who live in the village of Alfold Bars, West Sussex. Located in a beautiful region of the country between The Surrey Hills and The South Downs. As we were staying nearby for a week we thought that it would be interesting to arrange to meet with the local u3a.

We are both keen badminton players so we messaged Helen who leads a group of similarly minded members of the Cranleigh u3a. Helen very kindly invited us along to join them for their Wednesday afternoon session at Ellens Green Memorial Hall where we received a warm welcome from everyone.



We enjoyed 2 hours of friendly, good humoured, competitive play and a good chat. We were really pleased to receive an open invitation to return the next time we are in the area. We look forward to meeting you again soon.

**Dawn and Ken Middlehurst**

## Oxton, Prenton & District

### The Magic of the Wooden Beads: A Soroban Showcase

In an era of sleek touchscreens and instant digital answers, Praba and her son Rani, recently proved to a captivated audience that some of the best tools for the mind are centuries old.

The duo hosted a demonstration of the Soroban, the traditional Japanese abacus, bringing with them enough equipment for us all to take part in a hands-on learning experience. While many in the audience initially viewed the device as a simple low-tech calculator, they quickly realized this ancient art is far from a relic – it is a workout for the modern mind with profound benefits for brain health.

The room was buzzing with concentration and laughter as members tackled the challenges Praba was setting us. Always looking for fun ways to keep our minds sharp – this demonstration certainly highlighted a method to improve cognitive function and memory with the usage of the tactile beads honing our fine motor skills



The session was such a hit that several members asked about the possibility of learning more about Soroban, proving that even in 2026, a wooden frame and a few beads can still spark an interest.

**Kathy**  
Newsletter Editor

Behind every picture is a story to tell

## Salford

**European City Breaks:** Our European City Breaks group is now in its third year and was inspired when I spotted a similar group run by Ards Peninsula u3a. It is for members who are used to travelling independently and spending time on their own but who would enjoy company for an evening meal, or to chat over a glass of wine.



We aim for smaller, regional cities, with flight timings that make the most of the 3 nights/4 days. We meet in advance to discuss flights, accommodation and any other ideas. Members do their own bookings but may opt for the same hotel or shared self-catering accommodation. Given the timings, it's likely that members will be on the same flight but they are free to add on a couple of days (though no-one has taken up this option so far).



**Develop long term friendships**

There isn't a planned programme. We use a WhatsApp group to keep in touch and members share tips e.g. places of interest, local transport, good places to eat. We do our own thing during the day – there's usually someone to link up with – before meeting up in the evening.



So far, we've visited Limoges, Memmingen and Bologna; in May, we're off to Malmo, then Bilbao in September. Numbers have grown from 5 to 10, with a changing membership: 12 may be a maximum number for a cohesive group but we'll deal with that when we come to it.

You'll find information and a link to our galleries here <https://salfordu3a.com/groups/european-city-breaks/>

**Mary McBride**

## Mawdesley Villages

### Why do Older People Appreciate Philosophy?

The growing attendance at our Philosophy sessions caused me to consider the above question.

I think that the answer might lie in the age profile of those who attend, eager to contribute to the vibrant and absorbing dialogues.

Understandably we now have so many more experiences of life's trials and oscillations that lie dormant in our active minds – we can speak with some authority on matters such as morality, religion or human nature, having all lived through these aspects of life and learnt some inevitable lessons.



Secondly, we all understand the need to enjoy learning again and there is no subject better equipped to satisfy this than philosophy, as it combines our own knowledge with 'the history of ideas'.

To learn again – giving our own point of view – with colleagues and a presenter over a liberal range of subject matter, seems to prove quite uplifting and self-affirming.

Most of our age group will be parents and grandparents, so will naturally look to the future and the subsequent well-being of their offspring. This is a natural feature of growing older too. Philosophy indeed considers much of this when it asks its basic questions 'How should we live our life as human beings?' So, we can sometimes predict as well as reflect in our mental considerations.

Over the past few years, we have discussed aspects of the philosophies of Science, Religion, Ethics, Politics, Psychology & History in an interesting and informative way, hopefully inspiring some extra observation or reading. Basically, the stimulus of philosophical debate, learning and sharing its perceptions, perhaps puts our 'Third Age' into clearer perspective whilst offering us an element of wisdom that we older people are expected to retain.

As the subject presenter, I too have learnt a lot from the group dynamic as well as from studying the multifarious topic itself. Let us all learn together for as long as we can!



Socrates (470BC – 399BC) believed  
'Life without discourse would be unworthy of man'  
'An unexamined life is not worth living'

**John Latham**  
Philosophy Group Leader

**You are never too old to try new things**

# Douglas Valley Network

## Inspiring Visit to Eco Town, Leyland

Members of the Douglas Valley Network enjoyed a fascinating and uplifting visit to Eco Town, Lancashire's innovative environmental education centre based at Farington Waste Recovery Park, Leyland.

Eco Town is a hands-on learning experience designed to show how household waste is transformed, reused, and given new life – and the visit proved both eye-opening and energising.



From the moment the group stepped inside, Eco Town's imaginative layout captured everyone's curiosity. The centre is divided into three themed districts – Materials, Mechanical, and Bio – each containing its own "streets" that guide visitors through the journey waste takes once it leaves the kerbside. This creative approach made complex processes easy to understand and genuinely enjoyable to explore.

Guides explained how Lancashire's waste is sorted, separated, and processed so that valuable materials can be recovered. Members saw how metals, plastics, paper, and organics are diverted from landfill and turned into new products or even renewable energy. The scale and sophistication of the machinery impressed many, but it was the clarity of the explanations – and the real-world impact – that truly resonated.

The visit also highlighted the centre's wider mission: helping residents learn how to reduce, reuse, and recycle more effectively at home. Practical tips, clever demonstrations, and thoughtful displays sparked lively discussion among members, many of whom left determined to make small but meaningful changes in their own routines.



For the Douglas Valley Network members, the trip was far more than a tour. It was a reminder of the power of community education and the importance of understanding what happens to the things we throw away.

Members were inspired, informed, and full of admiration for the work taking place behind the scenes to protect Lancashire's environment.

### Eco Town contact details

**Lauren Bates**  
Education Administrator

**Tel:** 01772 642964

**email:** [eco.town@lancashirerenewables.co.uk](mailto:eco.town@lancashirerenewables.co.uk)

## Cockermouth

### u3a + Rotary – is it worth being a member of both?

Having seen the wide range of events and activities organised by our u3a, I simply had to join. What an excellent organisation it is. My only disappointment is many activities that appeal to me are over-subscribed – a testament to how popular they are.

Alongside u3a, I am also a member of Cockermouth Rotary Club. While u3a focuses on learning, activities and enjoyment; Rotary's primary emphasis is service to others – through fundraising, supporting community events, and helping worthy causes locally and overseas. Our two organisations share a sense of fellowship and fun. We achieve a great deal, enjoying ourselves doing it. Together we enrich lives.

Cockermouth Rotary Club runs a wide range of projects, including our Touch-a-Truck family fun day that brings together lorries, cranes, tractors and fire engines, along with funfair rides and other attractions for children and families to enjoy.



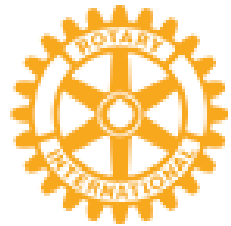
Our Daffodil Festival celebrates Wordsworth's famous line, "a host of golden daffodils". Working with schools and community groups to transform the town centre with handcrafted daffodils displayed in shop windows, on lampposts, railings and flower beds.

The result is a colourful celebration that lifts spirits and spreads cheer throughout Cockermouth.



It is immensely rewarding to be part of organisations whose activities make such a positive difference and if after attending all your u3a groups, you still have time and energy to spare, I would encourage you to also try Rotary which offers a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in your local community

**Rotary**  
in Cockermouth



Further information on Rotary can be found at:

Rotary Great Britain & Ireland:  
<https://www.rotarygbi.org/>

Cockermouth Rotary:  
<https://rotary-ribi.org/clubs/homepage.php?ClubID=1151>

**Ron Salmon**  
President Cockermouth Rotary Club  
Cockermouth u3a member  
07702 185066

**He who laughs most, learns best**

## Raising the profile of u3a in the UK Parliament

In a recent blog, Liz Ervine (u3a Council Representative for Scotland) wrote ... "The u3a movement took a step in raising its profile in Westminster in March, as u3a members from across the UK attended a special invitation visit to the House of Lords."

It was great to see u3a North West Region Committee Chair, Christine Garrity, enjoying the event ...



Liz Ervine goes on to say ...

"We began the day with a guided tour of the Palace of Westminster, a truly magnificent part of our architectural heritage that represents the four nations of the UK.

After the tour, we gathered in the Attlee Room for a Q&A session with four members of the House of Lords. Representing a mix of political parties, the members all had an interest in lifelong learning, education and housing.

" It was a very positive, productive day, but shouldn't be seen as a standalone event. Instead, it's the beginning of a deeper relationship between u3a and Parliament.

Strengthening this connection could help ensure the voices and experiences of older adults are better represented in national policy discussions."



2026 UK Parliament Week is from Monday 23 to Sunday 29 November. If your u3a wants to organise a special event, there are resources available.



Contact me for more information. Also, please remember that your MP/s will be in the constituency on Fridays. You could invite them to an interest group session.



**Kelvin Rushworth**  
Subject Adviser, UK Parliament  
Email: [kelvinregnat@outlook.com](mailto:kelvinregnat@outlook.com)

## Could your u3a hold a meeting or networking session?

Our North West Region provides advice and support to u3as throughout Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, yet we receive no financial support.

Our only source of funding is when we make a profit from the annual Summer School or when we charge a fee for attending an event.

The workshop day on 24 March cost £2,500, which would have worked out at over £30 per head, but fortunately on this occasion, the Trust met the costs as it was being run as a pilot for future events around the country.



One way of reducing costs would be for a Network or an individual u3a to host a meeting themselves. The Trust will provide a trainer for a minimum of 50 attendees at a face-to-face event, or alternatively they will provide online training if there are 20 participants.

However members often say how much they appreciate the opportunity to talk to each other rather than always listening to a speaker.

If your u3a would be willing to host a workshop or a networking session, please get in touch.

**Christine Garrity:** [chair@nwru3a.org.uk](mailto:chair@nwru3a.org.uk)

## Arts and Crafts Showcase 2026

Planning is under way for u3as in the NW Region to display work done by their various Art and Craft groups, and for such displays to be accessible to the public as well as other u3as.

The idea is that each participating u3a will plan, organise and publicise their own event in a local venue and we would publicise details across the Region, thus enabling members to visit each other's event and share ideas.



By using local venues, we would hope to raise awareness within the community of the existence of our organisation, and this could have the added benefit of attracting new members.



If your u3a would like to take part in this initiative,

please contact either:

[Pam chair@aou3a.uk](mailto:Pam_chair@aou3a.uk) or

[Christine chair@nwru3a.org.uk](mailto:Christine_chair@nwru3a.org.uk)



**u3a**

**North West Region**

**Learn  
Laugh  
Live**

