



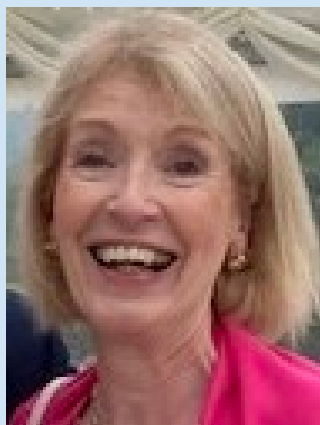
February 2026

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April 2026

**Learn
Laugh
Live**

**Do Something
Brilliant Today**



Christine Garrity
North West
Committee Chair

Please contact through the
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Greetings from the Chair

Happy New Year Everyone.

Thankfully the nights are slowly getting lighter, and the snowdrops are coming into flower – all signs that Spring is on its way.

Our NW Region is springing into action with a series of events planned over the coming months including a workshop day (see below), bookings are open for this year's Summer School, and we hope to hold further online Listening Forums in the near future.

Our u3as and networks will also be busy with the Douglas Valley Network planning a summer event and Meols u3a are looking for other u3as to join them at an event in August.

The u3a movement thrives because people are willing to step forward and offer help, so if you have ever thought 'Someone should do that', perhaps that someone could be you.

Best wishes,

Christine Garrity

Deadline for articles for next edition 6th April 2026

Please note our next newsletter should be in May. 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 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 is committed to supporting your u3a. To facilitate effective communication, please ensure that we are informed whenever there is a change in your officers by providing the most current contact details. If any updates have occurred, kindly forward your committee information to Mark Bradley at:

webmanager@nwr3a.org.uk.

How do you send out this Newsletter to your members?

We hope that you value our North West News and Events each quarter. We are proud of our publication which is aimed at every member of every u3a in our Region.

If you need to add your u3a newsletter distributor's contact to our database, please email their details to :

editor.nwu3a@gmail.com.

Together we can do more

Hold the Date

Workshops not to be missed!

24th March 2026

Quaker Meeting House Liverpool

- **Growth Matters – recruiting new members to a u3a**
- **Finance Matters – aimed at Treasurers and Committee members**



Further details will be published on the North West Region website nearer the date.

Watch this space

Members of our **Douglas Valley Network** are looking at co-ordinating an Arts & Crafts Showcase over the Summer months highlighting and featuring all the wonderful work produced by u3a members in their network



Meols u3a are inviting other u3as to join them in running a Recruitment Event in August



North West Region Summer School

Tues 11th August – Friday 14th 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
- Photography – Beyond the Snapshot
- Art challenges – the history of colour
- The UK and USA Political Scenes
- Operatunity – opera appreciation
- Intermediary Ukulele

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).



The sky is not the limit to knowledge

News from the u3as

Grange and District

25 Year celebration: In December our u3a celebrated 25 years. Over 140 members attended a special lunch at a local hotel and were entertained by member Malcolm Kimber who treated us to a photographic history of the group.

We also had a specially written poem by member Andrew Musgrave and music from the Sands Band – a local folk group, five of who are our members.



Starting from very small numbers, we now have in the region of 550 members and offer the choice of over 40 interest groups. Definitely something to celebrate!

Tricia Thomas

Upholland

Handbells: After attending the Handbells taster session at the North West Region AGM, we were inspired to start our own handbells group.

The committee agreed to the purchase of the bells, and we received lots of help and advice from Hilary, the national subject adviser, and Heather, leader of the handballs group at Mawdesley u3a. We were fortunate to find a group leader and deputy which enabled us to get started!



At last, we held our first meeting in October last year attended by 16 members and we now meet twice a month. Campanology has brought us lots of fun and laughter; You never know, perhaps by next year, we might be ready to perform in our annual Christmas concert!

Marion Logan

Mawdesley

Canoeing after dark: In early November as our last canoeing trip of the year, a group of 8 mad (enthusiastic) paddlers set off on a night paddle along the Leeds & Liverpool Canal from Burscough Bridge. The canoes were fitted with lights both fore and aft and each of the paddlers had a light fitted to their life jackets for safety. We also had Jim from the Canal and River Trust walking along the bank with safety line and torch as a safety measure just in case anybody fell in. Of course, none of our now expert canoeists fell in and we all had a great time. It all looks different in the dark!!

We did surprise a pair of swans who were amazed to see canoeists in the dark and had many comments from the people living on canal boats as they sat on their decks drinking wine. We also stopped the traffic on the swing bridges across the canal as Jim opened them for us to pass through on our travels.



Everybody had a great evening that stayed dry for us again. All year we have managed to canoe in fine weather and mostly in sunshine. A huge thank you goes to Graham for the loan of the equipment and the safety equipment and especially to Sara & Jim from the Canal & River Trust for accompanying us on our Night Canoe.

Andy Burnett

Aughton and Ormskirk

Raising money for Cancer Research: Saturday 20th September 2025 may have begun with torrential rain, but by evening the storm had well and truly lifted inside Aughton Village Hall where a capacity audience gathered for a night of music, laughter, and community spirit in aid of Northwest Cancer Research. With good company, wine, nibbles, and a programme brimming with talent, the stage was set for an evening to remember.

The concert opened in style with Treble-T, whose spirited performance of hits from the 70s and beyond quickly had the audience smiling and singing along. Their infectious energy provided the perfect launch to the night.



Next to take the stage was the ever-popular Aughton and Ormskirk u3a Ukulelers, who charmed the audience with their light-hearted take on all-time classics. Their unique ukulele sound – delivered with humour and verve – brought plenty of toe-tapping and laughter.

The third session saw members of the Aughton Male Voice Choir step forward, filling the hall with the richness of four-part harmony. Their renditions of much-loved favourites were powerful, polished, and deeply moving.

Develop long term friendships

Aughton and Ormskirk

During an enjoyable interlude, the irrepressible Anne Holland, Chairperson for Aughton Northwest Cancer Research Group, conducted the raffle with her trademark good humour, ably supported by the generosity of local firms and friends who had donated prizes.

The music then resumed with Treble-T returning for a lively second set that had the audience clapping, tapping, and even lending their voices to the choruses. Finally, the Aughton and Ormskirk u3a Ukuleers brought the evening to a jubilant close with a rousing finale, sparking table-rapping, thigh-slapping, and broad smiles all round.

The night was a shining example of community spirit – an audience brought together not only by music, but by a shared determination to support vital cancer research. The atmosphere was convivial, the performances outstanding, and the cause inspiring. Quite simply, it was Quite a Night!



On Friday 17th October Treble-T presented a cheque for £1090 to Northwest Cancer Research. The final total was the sum of ticket sales, raffle, and donations, some of which were extremely generous!

Huge thanks to all who attended and participated.

Don Warburton (Treble-T)

Southport

Christmas Choir: Visitors to one of Southport's Garden Centres in December certainly knew that Christmas was around the corner. Our Choir were in great voice singing Christmas songs and Carols accompanied by Alan tucked in amongst the merchandise.



There was much appreciation and applause from shoppers who joined in with the singing with uplifted spirits from our wonderful singers.



You are never too old to try new things

Southport

Christmas Santa: Our member, Michael Harrison had the children at Lady Green Garden Centre in raptures as he read them Christmas stories, found if they had been naughty or nice and gave out gifts to the children.

Santa always brings joy and it was a thrilling moment for a lot of little people. It was good give something back and make the children, parents and grandparents very happy.



Every year the Lady Green Garden Centre kindly loans Southport u3a hundreds of plants and shrubs for the Flower Show which we care for, clean the pots and return pristine straight after the show. We literally couldn't have a show garden without them. It was lovely that we could give something back for them.

Southport

RHS Britain in Bloom: Our volunteers were recognised when Southport was awarded the RHS Britain in Bloom award. The highest award for Volunteer Work benefiting residents and visitors – we were thrilled.

When the award came for Best Coastal Town, we were ecstatic. But when the overall award for the Best Britain in Bloom Town was finally awarded to Southport we were just stunned. The many Victorian Heritage Gardens the span our town and all cared for by groups of hardworking volunteers – many of them Southport u3a Members – these include Friends of Rotten Row, Botanical Gardens, Hesketh Parks, Kings Gardens, Ainsdale Garden and Lord Street are all supported by local residents.



Along with all the other groups in the town Southport u3a 'Just One Thing' Group also won an award. Earlier this year we were invited to care for a section of a main Victorian Park – Hesketh Park, clearing, planting and most recently planting over 3,000 spring bulbs – all donated by our u3a members. Our plaque has been in the local press, this was prior to the RHS award, so this has been a very special moment for our garden loving members.

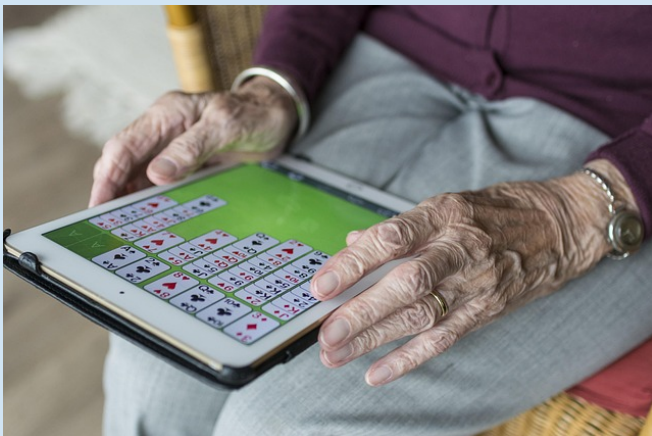
Christine Howorth

Mind the App: Britain's Older Generation vs Technology

In homes across the UK, a mighty battle is raging. It involves determination, confusion, mild panic, and at least one person shouting, "Why has it disappeared? I only pressed ONE BUTTON!" Yes, it's older people taking on modern tech — and somehow, winning.

Let's talk numbers. A national report shows that 4.7 million over-65s struggle with basic online tasks, including turning devices on, logging in, and knowing which password goes with which account — a challenge only slightly easier than assembling IKEA furniture blindfolded. Even better, around 2.3 million older people don't use the internet at all, and nearly half of them are over 75. If the digital world were a nightclub, this group has taken one look at the bouncers (Wi-Fi and two-factor authentication) and said, "No thanks, love, I'm going home."

And yet — tech use among older people is booming. Millions are now online, many regularly video-calling relatives, sending WhatsApps, and googling questions like "Is it dangerous if a dog eats a sock?" Age UK notes that older people are enthusiastically browsing, emailing, shopping, and banking online — presumably with the same intensity they once reserved for queueing at the Post Office. Tablets are especially popular with the 65+ crowd, proving once and for all that the iPad is basically the new crossword book.



He who laughs most, learns best

Then there's the tech designed especially for them. Devices like the GrandPad — built for simplicity and featuring a more responsive touchscreen — are becoming a hit. It's essentially a tablet that says, "Don't worry, you can't break me," which is precisely the energy older Brits appreciate.

Yet perhaps the greatest joy comes from the unexpected adventures technology inspires. Take the grandparent who tried to order groceries by speaking directly to the microwave. Or the older gentleman who asked Alexa to "stop interrupting" because she kept answering questions he was asking the dog. Or the WhatsApp group where one person's thumb sends 47 close-up photos to everyone at 2am.

But the benefits are undeniable. Tech keeps people connected, safe, entertained, and independent. It allows older adults to get medical advice, video-chat loved ones, and occasionally — accidentally — order 24 jars of marmalade.



Sure, some digital platforms aren't designed with older users in mind. And yes, a third of older adults risk being left behind in an increasingly online world. But the direction of travel is clear: Britain's seniors are conquering the digital frontier one baffling pop-up message at a time.

So the next time you're summoned to help fix the Wi-Fi, don't sigh — you are witnessing history. This is the Great British Digital Revolution of the Older Generation. It's glorious, unpredictable, and slightly chaotic. Just like the nation itself.

Anon Jan 2026

u3a Festival 2026 - Save the Date

1st-3rd July

The University of York

Our festival in 2026 is a chance for members from across the UK to gather and share the joy of the movement and will build on the success of the first event, with more availability, a stronger programme and even more opportunities to take part.

Margaret Fiddes, Chair of the Festival Working Group, says:

"The first festival was an amazing milestone for u3a, and the feedback we've had has been so encouraging. For 2026 we're aiming even higher – more space, more choice and a programme that will reflect the creativity and energy of our members."

What is most exciting is the chance to bring people together again. York's campus has so much to offer – from auditoria and exhibition spaces to beautiful grounds and excellent sports facilities – and we plan to fill it all with the best of what u3a has to offer."



Accommodation will be available on site. The campus is just east of the historic city of York, with excellent transport links by train and plenty of parking for those who prefer to drive.

All updates will be shared on the [u3a Festival 26 page](#). Ticket and accommodation bookings aren't open yet but please save the date.

If you are interested in taking part, or have any questions or ideas, please email festival@u3a.org.uk

Tune into the u3a Radio Podcast

u3a learn, laugh, live



**I'm Maggie West,
your National
Podcast presenter.**

Each month, in just 30 minutes, we share fascinating stories and learning experiences from across the country.

From life as an executive airline pilot, to being a maid at Buckingham Palace, to quantum physics made simple, and even the mysteries of the ancient archaeological site Göbekli Tepe in Turkey – we cover it all.

If you have a story or passion to share, we'd love to feature you. Get in touch at

communications@u3a.org.uk.

Listen now!



The u3a Radio Podcast is available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Podtail.

Or scan the QR code to listen on our YouTube channel.

Looking for a new challenge in 2026 become an Independent Monitor

- **Do you care about what goes on behind locked doors?**
- **Do you believe everyone should be treated fairly and humanely?**

If so, this could be the perfect opportunity for you.

The Independent Monitoring Boards (IMB) are recruiting volunteers across the UK. IMB members are ordinary people doing an extraordinary role: monitoring the treatment and conditions of people in custody and ensuring standards of fairness and decency.

As an IMB volunteer, you'll have unique access to prisons and immigration detention centres, speaking to those in custody and staff, observing daily life, and reporting on what you find. It's a role that offers insight into a world few people see – and the chance to make a real difference. What's involved?

- **Around 2–3 visits per month**
- **Talking to people in custody and staff**
- **Monitoring conditions and treatment**
- **Working as part of a supportive team**

What we're looking for:

- **Integrity, honesty, and objectivity**
- **Good communication skills**
- **A commitment to fairness, equality, and inclusion**
- **People who want to use their time to help others**

You don't need previous experience – full training and mentoring are provided. We welcome volunteers from all walks of life. You just need to be over 18 and live within 30 miles of the prison or detention centre you'll monitor.

Although this is an unpaid role, we cover travel and subsistence expenses, childcare/carer costs, and, in some cases, contributions towards loss of earnings.



Recruitment campaign now open!

Join our team of ordinary people doing an extraordinary role: independent monitors in prisons and immigration detention.

Recruitment is open now until 18 February. Start the year by doing something meaningful. Find out more and apply at:

<https://imb.org.uk/prison-volunteer/prison-volunteer-uk/>





u3a

North West Region

**Learn
Laugh
Live**