



# YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD...



*Active minds and active bodies are on the curriculum at the University of the Third Age*

**S**taying active, learning and having fun in your third age are the basic 'rules' for anyone involved in the University of the Third Age or U3A as it's more commonly known.

Founded in 1981, the UK U3A now has more than 439,000 members in 1,046 groups and the original principles are as true today as they were then – to promote lifelong learning through self-help interest groups sharing knowledge on a wide range of subjects chosen by members.

The Third Age is not about a particular age but more about people who are no longer in full-time employment or raising a family.

At its core are the interest groups formed by the members for the members covering as wide a variety of topics and activities as they wish. Learning is for its own sake with the key theme being enjoyment. Members are encouraged to 'teach' what they are interested in or have knowledge or experience of.

New members are always welcome, especially those with the enthusiasm to share their skills by leading new groups which can range from yoga to art and include bridge, languages, politics and walking to name but a few.

This year the organisation will be celebrating the first national U3A day on 3rd June to celebrate the new experiences that come with being in your third age.

The annual event which will take place on the first Wednesday in June, will show the amazing array of things members get up to and challenge pre-conceptions of what being an older adult means.

Each group is invited to mark the day however they see fit, perhaps with a display, a parade or for the daring a performance or flashmob. The idea being to showcase what U3A is all about and the diversity it offers.

Regional trustee Sue Stokes is coordinating the day and is excited that this will be the first of such celebrations.

She said: "From now on, every year, there will be a day dedicated to learning, staying active and having fun in your Third Age – that's people who are retired, semi-retired or no longer bring up a family.



"We hope this day will help to challenge the perceptions of older adults and will bring together all Third Agers in the community to learn about the contribution U3A makes to the quality of life for retired people."

Some of the U3A groups across the area have been telling us all about what they can offer and why you should join them, there's bound to be one near you and with the variety of interest groups to choose from you're sure to find one to suit and if not, why not start your own interest group?

## Woking Area U3A

Woking Area U3A was established in 1993 as a registered charity and has 1,630 members, approximately 10 per cent of all retired people in Woking. We have 106 interest groups covering art and crafts, computing and technology, leisure and games, health and fitness, history including aviation and military history and the world today, languages ranging from French, German, classical Greek and Latin and music, all of which are good for mental health.

The fitness group has been running since the start of WAU3A and members meet at Woking Leisure Centre on Monday mornings to enjoy exercising to music.

Social activities include theatre trips, holidays, day trips and members on their own group (MOTO). The group was set up for members who are either living on their own or have a partner who is not able to join in activities with them due to ill health.

Of these groups 81 hire meeting rooms and halls at 26 different venues around Woking, meaning there are 1,440 such meetings each year, in any one month Woking Area U3A is holding 120 meetings here – in any one working day WAU3A is holding six meetings somewhere in Woking. Twenty one groups meet in private houses or at sports venues. They add an additional 210 meetings to the list.

All this activity is managed and supported by teams of volunteers who give their time willingly for no material reward. All of the WAU3A activities are entirely funded by the members themselves.

Kath Street, Chairman

For more information contact **01483 323285** or email [membership@wokingareaU3A.co.uk](mailto:membership@wokingareaU3A.co.uk)

## Wonersh & District U3A

Wonersh U3A was established in 1984 as AIMS (Activities & Interests of Mature Students) following an initiative from the education department of University of Surrey. Ten years later it became affiliated to the U3A, which had become a nationwide organisation.

U3A is a movement which brings together people in their 'third age' to develop interests and continue learning in a friendly and informal environment. 'Third age' means the time after you have finished working full-time or raising your family and can again pursue older interests or try something totally new. The emphasis is on fun and mental/physical wellbeing, instead of exams.

Although known as Wonersh U3A, its membership covers all surrounding villages. With about 400 members, it is a self-help organisation: members are encouraged to use their previous experience to lead a group or teach a subject.

Meetings are held at venues in local villages, which can accommodate a wide range of activities including art, history, book club, Tai Chi, pilates, table tennis, woodcarving & craft, gardening, music making, opera for all, big band music, French, Latin, bridge, Mah Jong and speakers' corner. In addition, there are country walks, pub lunches, social events and coach trips to theatres, concerts, exhibitions, National Trust properties and other interesting places, as well as guided London walks.

For further details contact Cilla Morris on **01483 892348**, or visit <https://u3asites.org.uk/wonersh>.

## Guildford U3A

Guildford area U3A is planning a week full of events from 31st May to 6th June to celebrate 'U3A day' on 3rd June. The aim is to raise local awareness of the opportunities offered to those in semi- or full-time retirement.

Many of the 120 groups will feature, showing the diversity of our offerings: from Chi Gung to

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Chaucer, Geocaching to painting and Mandarin to singing, there is something for everyone!

Visits to concerts, theatres and outings are arranged on a regular basis, with a recent tour to the House of Commons, needing four separate trips to meet the high demand.

Coffee mornings fill the diary in the quieter holiday months, giving everyone the opportunity to meet our wider membership which is a great way to get to meet people. Social prescribing, an initiative supported by the Clinical Consulting Groups, is based on social responsibility, and could ease loneliness and depression amongst those in retirement.

In GU3A you are not a number, you are an individual and one that matters. We offer our 1,900 members the chance to meet new friends, find new challenges, live life to the full again when it had suddenly become quieter, and above all, it offers the opportunity to laugh along with like-minded people.

#### Fleet U3A

Formed in 1994, this group now has more than 1,600 members and more than 100 interest groups. These groups cover such areas as arts and crafts, games, health and fitness, history, languages and social: there really is something for everyone in their Third Age. They also hold monthly meetings with a speaker, an annual quiz, a Christmas lunch and a spring exhibition.

Organisers are always seeking to increase the number of our groups. Would you like to run a new group reflecting your own interests? If so, they will be pleased to help you get started and provide guidance and assistance to your group.

They run monthly meetings where all are entertained by a guest speaker. These are held on the third Wednesday of each month. They also hold monthly coffee mornings (a great way to get to know more about our U3A), social evenings such as quizzes or skittles, a Christmas lunch and occasional trips.

There is no age limit for membership, but activities are aimed at mature people not in full-time employment who wish to share in educational, recreational, social and/or creative activities.

The 2019-20 annual membership fee is £14. Most groups make a small additional charge, typically £1 per meeting, to cover the cost of venue hire, printed matter and other expenses.

To find out more about the interest groups and how to join, visit [www.flu3aweb.wixsite.com/fleetu3a](http://www.flu3aweb.wixsite.com/fleetu3a)

#### Alton U3A

The U3A has broadened its appeal and scope beyond that of just the academic since its conception in France in 1973 and nowhere more so than with the Alton group which pursues a variety of interests, academic and non-academic and some more physically challenging.

No qualifications are required and none are awarded. It is an entirely self-help organisation with more than 40 interest groups to choose from in Alton with many of the leaders/teachers being members themselves.

The group aims to offer something for everyone but anyone can bring a new idea to the group which if approved they might be invited to lead.

At the heart of the U3A is maintaining people's interest and engagement beyond the workplace making retirement rewarding and fulfilling.

Alton currently has 565 members and growing, anyone can attend one or more interest groups twice without making any longer commitment, but you're sure to get hooked by the variety on offer and if you do the annual fees are modest, ranging from £20 to £55 a year (excluding any external teaching fees) and depending on the cost of running a group.

Details can be found at [www.u3asites.org.uk/alton](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/alton) and you can pick up a copy of the "Blue Book" for free at Alton Community Centre.

*Godfrey Bruce-Radcliffe, Chairman*

#### Haslemere U3A

With over 700 members and more than 60 groups, Haslemere provide a wide range of stimulating activities designed for retired and semi-retired people. More than that, we believe we have a part to play in promoting physical

and mental health and have support from local doctors on this.

An independent charity founded 25 years ago and based at Haslemere Hall, we host monthly speakers there on varied subjects, to which all are welcome free of charge, including non-members.

Outdoor activities include five walking groups, birdwatching, petanque, cycling for fun and a new farming and wildlife conservation group. The six language groups include new testament Greek.

There are four lunch clubs (including a Sunday lunch group for solos), six bridge groups, book groups, wine appreciation, cooking for men, table tennis, dancing, singing, jazz appreciation, a ukulele group and art for all. There is something for everyone and new groups form every year.

We charge only £5 per annum for membership, with an extra £5 on joining. Additional fees are payable for some groups. For more information, see [www.haslemere-u3a.org.uk](http://www.haslemere-u3a.org.uk) or call our membership secretary Clare on **01428 643561**.

*Allen Chubb, Publicity Officer*

#### Runnymede U3A

Runnymede U3A was formed in 1998 and currently has over 400 members. Our members come from within and around Runnymede borough which includes the bustling towns and pretty villages of Addlestone, Chertsey, Egham, Egham Hythe, Englefield Green, Lyne, New Haw, Ottershaw, Row Town, Thorpe, Woodham and Virginia Water.

We run classes and activities led and taught by our members, for our members. We are a non-profit making, charitable, self-help organisation.

Have you retired from full-time employment? Are you looking to develop new interests, extend your social life, and enjoy life?

Runnymede U3A offers a programme of daytime educational, creative and leisure activities in a friendly, informal atmosphere; a wide range of interest groups requested and run by member; monthly meetings with visiting speakers; outings to places of interest; theatre visits; social events and occasional holidays.

Come to one of our monthly members meetings on the first Monday of the month at The Hythe Centre near Egham, starting with a talk at 2pm followed by refreshments, an opportunity to update on the latest news and chat to friends. You will be most welcome!

Our annual membership fee is £12.50 and entitles you to attend as many group activities as you wish.

For more information please visit <https://u3asites.org.uk/runnymede/welcome>

#### Windsor and District U3A

Windsor and District U3A is celebrating the New Year with the launch of five fresh interest groups to add to the existing total of 86.

During the past 12 years this U3A has built a flourishing membership which now approaches 700 – and new members join nearly every month.

Its groups reflect a wide variety of interests shared by members and most meet monthly or fortnightly. They include nine language groups, five for Bridge, music of all varieties, including one dedicated to British music of the 1930s and 1940s, art, current affairs, film, theatre, chess, mah-jong, Boys Toys, a choir and geocaching. For the sports-minded, there is table-tennis, walking and cycling.

One novel idea that took off in spectacular fashion was the formation of a group to explore London. After only a few months, more than 120 people had signed up and now several times a week members wave their bus pass and board the 702 to London for a day's pre-researched outing, plus a pub lunch.

Sue White, Windsor U3A's groups coordinator, said: "Our U3A provides a framework in which older people can be involved in helping to create, join and run many learning-based activities which boost our knowledge and skills, enhance our physical and mental wellbeing and keep us socially connected.

"It is probably at its best when people feel they are meeting up with like-minded friends to share their knowledge of subjects or pastimes they love."

To find out more go to Windsor U3A's website at <https://u3asites.org.uk/windsor/welcome>

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