



**The Year of the Fire Horse is renowned for its Vibrant Energy and Bold Spirit
...Reminds me of our u3a Members**

Contents

- A Word from the Chair**
- Invitation for New Members**
- Group News**
- Monthly Meetings**
- Volunteering...**

Well, here we are in March already – how did that happen so quickly! As the days begin to lengthen and we see the first signs of spring (aren't the daffodils glorious!), it is wonderful to see our u3a community buzzing with so much activity and a true spirit of connection.

A very special welcome goes out to those of you who have joined us since August last year. We know that joining a new organisation can feel like a bit of a whirlwind, which is why I am delighted to invite you to our New Members Meeting on 8th April at Queen Mary's College (10:00–12:00). It's a relaxed morning designed just for you—a chance to meet the Committee, chat with some of our Group Leaders, and discover all the doors that u3a can open for you. We'll even have a light lunch before our main monthly meeting – full details are provided later in this newsletter.

Group News

This month's edition is a testament to the sheer variety of what we offer. Whether we are trying something new or revisiting an old favourite, we are always connecting through common interests. You may have noticed Lyn's note on the front page regarding 2026 being the Year of the Fire Horse. Her observation that its Vibrant Energy and Bold Spirit reminds her of our members is spot on. That spirited energy is exactly what I see when I look at our current programme - from the fun of our new Bingo Group to the thoughtful, slippers-on discussions of our newly renamed Literature Old and New group, there really is something for everyone.

I am also particularly struck by the vital work being done by the Health & Wellbeing Group; their recent focus on liver health reminds us how important these shared sessions are for our daily lives.

National News

Our Vice-Chair Cynthia represented our u3a at the recent Regional and National group meetings – she reported back that our u3a is performing well, which is very encouraging.

A Call for Your Support

As we continue to grow, we are looking for a few more "helping hands" to join our behind-the-scenes team and Committee. Whether it is a small, one-off task or a more formal Committee role, your involvement is what makes our u3a work.

If you have administrative skills or simply a desire to see our u3a succeed, please consider stepping forward. You will have plenty of support from the current team as you find your feet.

Please email: volunteer@basingstokeu3a.org

A Special Welcome to Our Newest u3a Members!



We are delighted to invite all members who have joined **u3a** since August 2025 to our upcoming **New Members Meeting on Wednesday, 8th April 2026.**

You're Invited

Discover What Your u3a Has to Offer

This meeting is a wonderful opportunity to settle in, meet fellow members, and explore the many activities available to you. It's the perfect time to discover how you can get involved in our vibrant community.

Our Committee members will be there to welcome you, and—more importantly—our Group Leaders will be on hand to share their experiences, answer your questions, and provide insight into their specific groups.

The Schedule:

- **10:00 – 12:00:** New Members Meeting (Queen Mary's College)
- **12:00:** A light lunch will be served
- **Afternoon:** You are then invited to stay for our regular monthly meeting in the hall. This month's guest speaker is local author **Dr. Sohail Husain**, who will present his fascinating talk: *"One Family's Incredible Story."*

We look forward to meeting you and helping you make the most of your membership. (You should have received an individual invitation.)

Group news

... from the Bingo Group

First round of Bingo for Basingstoke u3a



People came armed with their bingo dabbers and the sound of quacking filled the room as two little ducks was called at our new Bingo group which met on 28th January .

We had games of six lines and six full houses, an entry lottery and lots of lovely prizes for the winners. Thanks to all the u3a members that have donated prizes as well as Tesco's community support.

The conversation over tea and coffee was "I only needed 1 number" 😊

What a lovely way to spend an afternoon.

If you are interested, log onto the Membership Portal and put down your name, you never know your luck!

Group leader Jane Lawrence

Group news

..... from the Literature Old & New



Our new Identity

We would now like to be known as **Literature Old and New**, as this better reflects the nature and focus of our group.

The revised name gives a clearer indication of our aim to explore a diverse range of literary works, incorporating both classic and contemporary texts.

Each June, I ask for suggestions comprising five classic works and five post-war titles. This collaborative approach ensures that our reading list reflects a balance of enduring literary masterpieces alongside more contemporary novels

We meet on the 4th Thursday of each month excluding August and December.

This means that longer books can be chosen for September and January. I then call for a vote and assemble a list for the next academic year.

Our other feature is that we meet on Zoom, a link circulated by Margaret Hayes. This enables the less agile to participate and we can wear our slippers! As the leader I take it upon myself to watch everyone in case someone is having trouble getting a word in edgeways! It's not obligatory however and nor does it matter if you've not quite finished reading the book.

This group has been running for many years, however, we have recently experienced a decline in numbers. We would be delighted to welcome new members to join us and bring fresh energy to the group.

Looking forward to hearing from you. In friendship Jemima Nielsen

Group News

Invitation: Open Taster Day

.... from the Square Dancing Group

On **Thursday, 12th March**, the **Square Dancing Group** is holding an open taster day to encourage more people to try dancing and experience the joy it brings.

Dancing is good for the body, mind and soul, so why not give it a try and join our fun relaxed dance group for some **American square dancing**.

Event Information: 14th March, 14:00-16:00, Ridgeway Hall, Buckskin, RG22 5BW
(extra parking behind the shops) Bring 50p for refreshments and/or your water bottle

Group Leader Margaret will be there to welcome you.



Taking Care of Your Liver

In February we turned our attention to liver health. Abi Hurst from the **British Liver Trust** (<https://britishlivertrust.org.uk>) guided us through the many aspects of our heaviest internal organ and the largest gland in the human body.

First, let's look at some facts. What causes 11,000 U.K. deaths per year? It's liver disease. Liver-related deaths have doubled in the last seven years. What comes into your mind when you think of liver disease? You probably think of alcohol. That's a bit of a myth. Children can be affected by liver disease so it's not all about alcohol. Rarely do people link bad diet to liver problems and yet diet is the number one cause of liver-related problems. When it comes to organ disease, the liver is in the unenviable position of being the only organ disease not reducing over time and is the third most common cause of premature death in the U.K. Three-quarters of diagnoses are in a hospital setting. The main cause for this is a simple lack of awareness.

Now let's look at the challenges of combating liver disease. Early diagnosis is important for a healthy recovery, but the liver has no nerves so it is not able to tell you when something is not working properly. Similarly, liver cancer is hard to spot in the early stages. Also, routine blood tests do not test for liver problems as standard.

Fortunately, it is not all doom and gloom. For a start, of all our internal organs, the liver is unique in that it will regenerate itself. In addition, while some diseases such as diabetes and hepatitis can affect the liver, with a healthy lifestyle, nine out of ten cases of liver disease could be prevented. The liver is resilient.

So what can we do? The British Liver Trust provide support for all ages. They work to increase awareness of liver disease and offer support.

1. What can we do ourselves?

- a. Visit <https://britishlivertrust.org.uk> and see when the British Liver Trust mobile screening unit is in your area. Their caravan is equipped with fibro scanners that measure how flexible and healthy your liver is. Examination is free and after your scan you will receive advice on what to do next. Typically, one in ten visitors show signs of liver disease so do get checked out.
- b. Live a healthy lifestyle. Eat well and adopt a healthy diet. Avoid excess salt and sugar. Keep active and exercise. Remember: 'Everything in moderation'. Balance good and bad days.
- c. If you are having a blood test, ask your doctor to run additional liver health tests at the same time. If you are fatigued, explain to your doctor that you are feeling a bit tired and request a blood test for liver disease.

Changing subject, We have the opportunity to earn a grant for future sessions by participating in a feedback session on local health services. If you haven't already signed up, "the more the merrier"—please contact Elaine to let her know if you would prefer to join a workshop or simply complete a questionnaire

Our next meeting is on **12th March 2026 at 10am at Popley Fields Community Centre**. We will host two guest speakers: Helen Maskell from **The Ark Charity** Basingstoke, who will discuss cancer support for patients and families, and a second speaker focusing on falls prevention. We hope to see you there!

Ken Surplice ... pp Elaine Budd

Group News

... from the Creative Writing Group



The creative writing **podcast** for March is called **A Resolution Fulfilled** written and read by Guy Caplin. (Group Leader)

<https://youtu.be/baeB5klCEYw>

Behind the Scenes Volunteer Opportunities

Our u3a activities are thriving but to keep our bold spirit moving forward as we continue to grow, the pressure on our core team increases. To put it simply: we need more volunteers to support you.

Without extra help behind the scenes, we cannot maintain the vibrant, well-run community we all enjoy. Whether it is a small, one-off task or a more formal Committee role, your involvement is what makes this work.

If you have administrative skills or simply a desire to see our u3a succeed, please consider stepping forward. You will have plenty of support from the current team as you find your feet.

Please email: volunteer@basingstokeu3a.org for further information.

Monthly Meetings

When: 2nd Wednesday of most months

Where: Popley Fields Community Centre, Carpenters Down, RG24 9AE

Meeting Schedule

- **13:30** – Tea, coffee & biscuits: Time for chatting
- **14:00** – Main Presentation
- **15:00** – Q&A, followed by refreshments to finish

Upcoming Programme

11 March 2026

Guest Speaker: Russell Whitworth

Topic: AI and What It Means for Us

Russell will be introducing us to the world of Artificial Intelligence, exploring:

- **What is AI?** An easy-to-understand breakdown of the technology.
- **How does it work?** A look behind the curtain of modern software.
- **Capabilities:** What AI can actually do for us today.
- **Dangers & Issues:** Navigating the risks and ethical concerns.
- **The Big Question:** Is AI a friend or a foe?

08 April 2026

Guest Speaker: Dr. Sohail Husain (*Queen Mary's College*)

Topic: Beyond Beliefs: One Family's Incredible Story

13 May 2026

Guest Speaker: Ian Worley

Topic: Charles Darwin

Reduced fee for late joining Joining after 1st March 2026

Please share the following information if you are aware of **anyone** who is wanting to join our u3a. New members joining **after** 1st March can pay a reduced fee of £30 to the end of the current membership year (**ending 31st August 2026**)

Many thanks, your Committee.

Contributions for April's News Edit.

Got a story to tell? Whether it's a light-hearted group update, a photo from a recent project, or a serious piece of news, we want to hear from you for the **April News Edit**.

- **Deadline:** Mid-March
- **Max words:** 500
- **Email:** Lyn at pr@basingstokeu3a.org

Let's keep our community connected. We can't wait to see what you've been up to

Interested in viewing our other u3a groups?

Existing members can explore our wide range of activities by visiting the **Basingstoke u3a Portal**. Once logged in, you can view all available groups and arrange taster visits: **Click here to log in:** <https://bit.ly/49zR26F>

Link to the Regional



For interesting information, training, festivals and more on the Regional u3a website click on the link below:

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/>

Empty Foil Blister Packs recycling

A number of u3a's are collecting **EMPTY** blister packs for recycling which we agree is a wonderful idea, a bit of giving back to help the environment. We invite you to bring your **empty** blister packs to the monthly meeting for collection.

