



*Happy Valentines Day*



- A word from the Chair
- Local group news
- Introducing Ian Worlsly
- And much more....

**Happy Valentine's Day** to all our members! I hope you are truly enjoying the start of this new u3a year and are finding plenty of opportunities to get involved with our various groups.

This month, I am asking everyone to join me in an early "spring clean" of our group registrations. We currently have 18 groups with waiting lists, and we have many new and existing members who are eager to join them. If you find that you are no longer attending a particular group, please take a moment to delete your name from the list. It would be a massive help in opening up spaces for others; I am just as guilty as anyone, so I will be doing my own spring cleaning very soon!

Our Committee Members are all working incredibly hard to develop our u3a, come up with fresh ideas, and get more activities off the ground. One of our biggest challenges in launching new groups is finding cost-effective halls or venues. If you know of any new spaces opening up near you that might be suitable for u3a activities, please do let us know.

This month's News Edit is packed with inspiration. You'll find updates from our **Ukulele, Calligraphy, Walking Football, and Creative Writing groups**. I especially recommend the enlightening article from **the Health & Wellbeing** group regarding sleep—it is a fascinating read that will certainly keep you awake!

Warm regards, Toni Shaw, **Chair, Basingstoke – Old Basing u3a**

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### Friends news

#### ....from the Only Connect group

This new group – the first u3a *Only Connect* group in the country, so far as I am aware – had its first meeting on 21 January. Seventeen members were brave enough to take on the challenge, and despite a few teething problems as we all settled in, everyone seemed to enjoy the quiz. We did overrun timewise, but the Community Centre staff were kind enough to let us finish without interruption. I will try to get through everything more quickly at our February meeting!

Thank you to everyone for helping to tidy up when we finished, and for the very supportive emails which I received following the quiz. They were much appreciated.

#### **If you'd like a flavour of what the teams faced:**

**Question:** What links Hedy Lamarr, Marie Antoinette, Christoph Waltz and Arnold Schwarzenegger?

**Answer:** The people in were all born in Austria.

**Question:** What comes fourth in this sequence: horse, cow, dog, ...?

**Answer:** The fourth term is cat, the sequence being, in reverse order, the last four animals swallowed by the old woman who swallowed a fly.

**Rod Marshall, Group Leader**



## Friends news

..... from the Ukelele group



On December 6th, the Christ Church Christmas Tree Festival in Chineham was filled with the sounds of our u3a ukulele group. It was our very first public performance—a proud moment for a group that only began its journey last May!

Most of our members had never picked up an instrument before that first meeting. Yet, fuelled by curiosity and a bit of courage, everyone walked away from that first session able to play "You Are My Sunshine." Since then, our mornings have been defined by laughter, learning, and the occasional (very loud) mistake—always fuelled by tea, coffee, and biscuits.

Following the wonderful reception at our Christmas debut, we are more motivated than ever. Why not join us? We meet on the **1st and 3rd Wednesday morning of each month at Christ Church, Chineham**. We are currently looking for a drummer to join the beat, but players of any instrument are more than welcome.

It's scientifically proven that learning an instrument is fantastic for brain health—and we can prove it's even better for the soul!

Group leader, Cynthia Garraway-Smith

Email:- [garraway31@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:garraway31@yahoo.co.uk)



## Friends news

### ..... from the Calligraphy Group



Everyone loves the **Uncial script**

The calligraphy group welcomed new students in the autumn term as well as returning ones. We tackled a much-loved script called Uncial, whose origins lie in the monasteries of Western Europe up to the 10th century. However we would, now like to bring it into the 21st century and Ireland has almost adopted it as iconic - it goes well with Celtic Knot designs. It is a marvellous hand for creating Christmas and Easter cards, so with that as our goal, students learned these lovely rounded shapes and those who had done it with me before brushed up on it again. (Not literally of course as it is written with a broad-edged nib.)

I set them tasks of writing a short (or longer text) and then producing a pleasing layout. The added bonus of this script is that it only consists of capitals, so unlike others you don't have to learn the lower-case letters in addition. We added colour either as a background, or infilling some of the letters or writing in different colours. This gave scope for using pastels, coloured pencils, gouache paints and water colours.

Imagine my surprise when in December I was showered with Christmas Cards all done by hand! Some of my students are crafters or painters and this shows in their work, others have no artistic background at all but just love writing.

**Here are some examples:**



This term we will be adding large decorated capitals, modernising the older versions seen in bibles and books of yore and using them with the Uncial script. This will give us the opportunity to add patterns to the letters, using much more colour and even gold! Who said calligraphy was just black and white!

Submitted by Jane Hussey, Tutor

## Friends news

### ..... from the Walking Football Group

Think your football days are behind you? Think again! Our Walking Football group is perfect for anyone looking for a social, low-impact way to keep fit. For both men and women.

Whether you're 60 or 80, a seasoned pro or a complete beginner, you'll find a warm welcome here. We play a gentle, "no-running" version of the game using a soft ball to keep things safe and fun. It's a brilliant way to boost your health and make new friends.

We meet on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays, 5pm – 6pm at Everest Community Academy and play with 5-a-side goals

Remember to bring a cold drink for our half-time social break!

**Come and have a go!** If you are interested then please email Richard Field at [rfield1952@gmail.com](mailto:rfield1952@gmail.com).



## **Improving Our Sleep**

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This month the Health and Wellbeing group had an engaging and enlightening talk from Dr Lindsay Browning a professional sleep therapist.

We discussed why we need sleep, what does good sleep look like. what are the stages of sleep, how to practice good sleep hygiene, what stops us sleeping, how to distract and relax the mind. Below is just a small sample of the information Dr Lindsay gave us.

Exercise, eating well, socialisation and sleep are now seen globally as key factors for health and wellbeing.

Whilst asleep our brain and bodies go through many important healing processes, so it is vital that you have good sleep quality. All stages of sleep are of equal importance. During sleep you go through sleep cycles that last approximately 90 mins.

You will go through wake, to light sleep, REM sleep, deep sleep, and back up again.

Everybody wakes up approx. every 90 minutes; you will only realise it if it lasts longer than 2 minutes. This is totally normal. As you get older, we start to worry about waking up and having broken sleep. There are only two types of people that don't wake up at night, those under general anaesthetic and those that are dead!

Don't think going to the loo wakes you up, it's the other way around, you wake up and then think, I need to go to the loo. Turning on the light will not have a detrimental effect on your sleep but may be safer.

Many people stress about not getting a good night's sleep because they wake up feeling groggy. This is a myth. How you feel when you wake up, is purely down to what part of the sleep cycle you wake up in. If you are pulled from a deep sleep by the alarm you may feel groggy. If you wake up when in light sleep, you will feel refreshed, even if this is just a couple of hours after going to bed. In the morning, many stress about their quality of sleep and how they feel. They will carry that anxiety about sleep quality into the rest of the day and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as you go to bed, stressed.

Only one fifth of the population of the UK get 8 hours sleep.

One tip to improving sleep is to start learning something new. The more physically active we are the more sleep we need and so we tend to sleep better.

The key to good sleep hygiene: Consistent bedtime and wake time. Exercise and sunlight. Wind down before bed. Separate work and bed. Avoid caffeine, smoking or alcohol. All are stimulants even though they make you feel sleepy they wreck your REM sleep.

There are many different ways to relax. Lindsay outlined the 4-7-8 breathing technique. Slow deep breathing that goes deep into your lungs. Do this 8-10 times.

To stop your brain racing at night, give it time to think things through during the day. Nowadays we are rarely bored. We entertain ourselves with phones and iPad in quiet times.

If you cannot sleep - get up. Ideally go into another room. Do something that activates your brain, read a book, do a puzzle. Once you are calm, try sleeping again.

## Health & Wellbeing Cont....

But whatever you do don't eat. Your body will remember that lovely snack at 3 am and it may become a pattern.

If you wake up hungry, you should eat more before you go to bed.

If you have real insomnia, you could try CBT-1. Recommended by the NHS and the World Health Organisation. Many GP's don't know about CBT-1 but it is available on the NHS, or you can pay via a sleep professional. So ask for it.

A question from the floor – is an afternoon nap good for you. If it's because of bad sleep then you should try to avoid or have a short nap not a long one. A nap counts towards your total sleep hours, so whilst it is not a problem, it will shorten how much you need at night. The way to think about it is that it takes the edge of the sleep hunger if you fall asleep in front of the TV, then you may struggle to go to sleep when you go to bed.

Next month we will be looking at the Liver and how to keep it healthy. We hope to see you there.

Group leader, Elaine Budd

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## Friends news

### ..... from the Creative Writing Group

The Creative Writing Group's February podcast is now online <https://youtu.be/SEJIGdJNEG8>

**The Lost Property** was awarded first place in the BMAF flash fiction competition. It was written by Cathy Foster and read by Jo Weineck.

Group leader Guy Caplin

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## Interested in joining 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>**

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## MONTHLY Meetings ....

Are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of most months.  
Popley Fields Community Centre at Carpenters Down, RG24 9AE

### Usual timings are:

- 13:30 -Tea, coffee & biscuits time for chatting
- 14:00 – Presentation
- 15:00 – Q&A, tea, coffee & biscuits to finish.

### Programme:

- 11 February 2026 – Guest Speaker - Ian Worley- Around the world Yacht racer.
- 11 March 2026 - Guest Speaker – Russell Whitworth – AI and what it means for us.
- 8 April 2026 – TBA



## Introducing

### .....February Speaker Ian Worley



Ian Worley Ocean sailor, speaker and entertainer, will be our guest speaker on the **11 February 2026**.

Ian has sailed all his life and has a tremendous love of the sea. He has raced around the world, sailed oceans with his young family and now researches new material with a nautical theme as well as speaking on several subjects.

Ian will be speaking about his experience racing around the world on the 78 yacht Great Britain II.

In 1977 Ian enrolled as a watch leader, later promoted to 1st Mate, on the 78 maxi racing yacht Great Britain II. They raced furiously, encountering many storms, damage to the boat, injuries and a lightning strike. Ian filmed for the BBC throughout the race and recounts these events and more, in a fully illustrated talk.

He includes amusing anecdotes which always helps to bring the story to life and carry the audience along with the unfolding story.



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## 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.



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## Contributions for March's News Edit.

We warmly invite **all members** to contribute to the monthly editions of our u3a News Edit. Your stories, whether serious or light-hearted, are what make our publication vibrant and engaging. We are keen to receive accounts of your activities, projects, group events, and photographs.

Information from **group leaders** is especially welcome, so please encourage them to get involved and share updates about your groups.

Send your contributions to the Lyn at [pr@basingstokeu3a.org](mailto:pr@basingstokeu3a.org) by the middle of the month to make the next edition.

Remember, your newsletter relies on **members** to share news with fellow **members**.

Your involvement helps make our u3a community stronger and more connected.

We reserve the right to edit.

PRO Lyn Franklin