

u3a

learn,
laugh,
live

Alnwick

Welcome Pack



<http://alnwick.u3asite.uk>

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Introduction

“ u3a shows the value of communities of interest and learning which are not defined by age, or by past experience, but instead are defined by the experiences still to be explored”.

Thank you for joining us. Our u3a gives you opportunities to develop your interests, make new friends and have fun. During these uncertain times, demand to be part of the u3a movement is as high as ever, with people looking for new ways to keep connected with each other and keep up their cultural, educational and social activities.

Our amazing members have stepped up and found new and creative ways to keep connected with each other and continue their learning. You will see in this pack – there are many examples of new projects, ideas and shared skills and learning that our members are taking part in.

In this pack you will find what’s available in our u3a including access to interest groups and communication platforms. You will also have access to the national Third Age Matters magazine, to the national online newsletter and various social media sites.

For more information about what we offer, go to our website at

<https://alnwick.u3asite.uk>



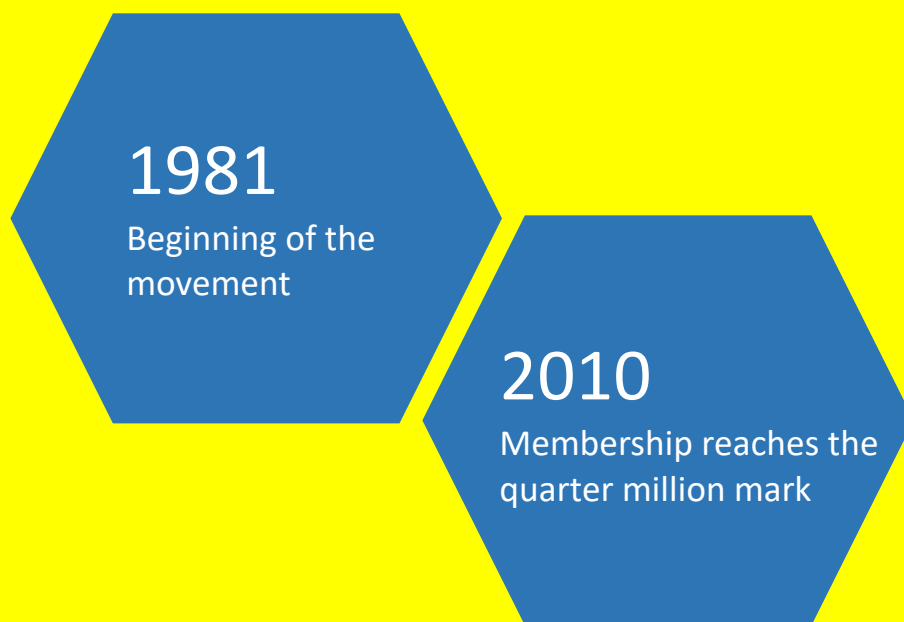
We have Interest Groups covering subjects such as Archaeology, Geology, History, Line Dancing, Mahjong, Poetry, Science and Walking, to name just a few. The choice is wide, and the decision about what to do is made by the members for the members.



History

Our founders envisaged a collaborative approach with peers learning from each other. The u3a movement was to be self-funded, with members not working towards qualifications but learning purely for pleasure. There would be no distinction between the learners and the teachers – everyone could take a turn at being both if they wished.

From its beginnings in 1981, the movement grew very quickly and by the early 1990s, a u3a was opening every fortnight. u3as grew in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in 2008 membership was increasing by 11% every year. 2010 saw our membership hitting the quarter million mark.



At the end of 2016, the u3a movement reached the milestone of 1,000 u3as, which was celebrated by a conference with speakers including Eric Midwinter, one of the founders of the u3a movement.

Today, our movement includes over 400,000 u3a members in more than 1,000 u3as and is continuing to grow every day. Alnwick is one of 47 u3as in the Northumberland Region

Ethos and Principles

Lifelong Learning

- Membership of a u3a is open to all people who are no longer seeking full time gainful employment.
- Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.

Self Help

- Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire; by the members, for the members.
- No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.
- There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all u3a members.

The Mutual Aid Principle

- Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the u3a movement.
- No payments are made to members for services rendered to any u3a.
- Each u3a is self-funded by its membership.

Benefits of u3a Membership

The major advantage is enjoying new interests and making great friends in a relaxed environment. In recent research, our members reported amongst other things feeling supported in new communities when they moved house, learning new skills, feeling valued and enjoying life.

If there's enough demand for a certain subject, you can start up an Interest Group yourself. Each Group has its own volunteer leader or coordinator who has a particular interest or expertise in the particular subject. For language classes, most of the Group leaders tend to have specialist knowledge. Sometimes (pre-Covid and now again post-Covid), we arrange trips.

In the past couple of years, we have had visits to Raby Castle, Hartburn, Bolam, Capheaton Hall, Melrose and Traquair House, Beamish, Bowes Museum, Newcastle Trinity House and Chesters Roman Fort.

Most of our members are retired, but u3as open their membership to any people not in full-time employment, thus becoming more inclusive and widening the age range of the membership. There is general agreement that not only physical but intellectual activity enriches and prolongs life in our later years.

Alnwick u3a

At the time of writing, Alnwick u3a is 25 years old, having been founded in August 2000, and had 239 members at the end of August 2025. Details of the current Committee are set out on page 9, followed by an explanation of what we do on page 10.

The schedule of monthly meetings is on page 11, followed by details of our Interest Groups starting on page 12.



What Do We Do?

Alnwick u3a holds monthly meetings of general interest, organises outings and runs a range of groups. Starting in September 2017, monthly meetings and many group meetings have taken place at St Michael's Church Hall, Bailiffgate, Alnwick. The monthly meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of the month, from 2pm until 4pm. The schedule of meetings for the remainder of 2026 is set out on page 11.

The groups normally meet at various times and in various venues. They cover many interests and enable members to share their knowledge, skills and expertise in the friendly and informal way that is unique to the u3a. Details of our current groups are given starting on page 12.

It only takes one or two interested people to get a Group going, and the Group leader does not have to be a specialist on the topic. We all learn from one another. If you have an interest that you would like to share with others, or there is some topic our current groups do not cover in which you would be interested, please talk to Anne McMillan, our Groups Coordinator.

Our annual subscription for 2026/27 is £27. This includes a £4.20 capitation fee to the National u3a in return for the services they provide. We ask members to contribute £2 at monthly meetings to help towards the cost of room hire, speakers' expenses and refreshments. This also includes a raffle ticket and there is a prize at each meeting.



Committee Members 2025/26

The Committee members are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting, which is usually held in October. The current Committee members, listed below, were elected at the AGM held on 16th October 2025. The next AGM will take place on 15th October 2026.

Roles were agreed at the Committee meeting on 3rd November 2025, as shown below. Committee members can be contacted at [**www.alnwick.u3asite.uk/contact**](http://www.alnwick.u3asite.uk/contact)

Chair	Carollyn McDonald Carollyn is also Safeguarding Officer
Vice Chair	Shelley Willis Shelley is also Assistant Newsletter Editor
Business Secretary	Cathy Robinson
Membership Secretary	Pat Ashton Pat is also Accessibility Officer
Treasurer	Trevor Robinson Trevor is also Newsletter Editor, Web and Beacon Manager and GDPR Data Controller
Groups Coordinator	Anne McMillan Anne also provides liaison with the Church Hall
Minutes Secretary	Mary Brazier Mary is also Assistant Web Manager and manages our Facebook group
Sue Willoughby	Committee Member
Lin Jones	Co-opted Member (6/7/26)

Monthly Meetings in 2026

Just a few left for 2026:

17th September We are what we eat: how our food intake expresses our affiliations and life journey - Lynn Harbottle, dietitian and medical social anthropologist with extensive clinical and academic experience, will give a presentation which reflects on her own food influences to illustrate the meanings and significance we assign to food and eating.

15th October Annual General Meeting

Followed by - A marine animal on the beach - what should you do? - Lorna Llewellyn, a volunteer with the British Divers Marine Life Rescue, will enlighten us with her presentation.

19th November The buildings of David Stephenson - Richard Pears, Durham University Librarian, makes a welcome return to introduce us this time to David Stephenson, an 18/19th century architect from the Northeast. Richard Pears

10th December Daring to make a comeback including Christmas Social - Martin Shingler, writer, editor and film historian, making a welcome return with a presentation which will explore the reasons why some ageing film stars have risked reputational damage by making a cinematic comeback after a significant period of absence. He considers how several stars fared when taking that risk.

Our Interest Groups

Note – All Group details are subject to change - up-to-date details can be found at <http://alnwick.u3asite.uk/groups>

<u>Archaeology</u> Status: Active Monthly on Tuesday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 3rd Tuesday of each month	<u>Architecture</u> Status: Active Monthly on Thursday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 4th Thursday; some all day outings	<u>Art Appreciation</u> Status: Active Monthly on Friday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 2nd Friday
<u>Book Group 1</u> Status: Active Monthly on Tuesday mornings 10:00 am–12:00 pm 2nd Tuesday	<u>Book Group 3 (St Michael's)</u> Status: Waiting list Monthly on Monday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 3rd Monday	<u>Bridge</u> Status: Active On Friday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 1st and 3rd Fridays
<u>Choir Group</u> Status: Active Monthly on Tuesday mornings 11:30 am–1:30 pm 3rd Tuesday of each month	<u>Crafts Group</u> Status: Active Monthly on Thursday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 1st Thursday	<u>Cribbage</u> Status: Active On Wednesday mornings 10:00 am–12:00 pm 2nd and 4th Wednesdays
<u>Family History Group</u> Status: Active Monthly on Wednesday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 1st Wednesday of the month	<u>Food</u> Status: Active Monthly on Wednesday mornings 10:00 am–12:00 pm 3rd Wednesday	<u>French</u> Status: Active On Monday mornings 10:00 am–12:00 pm 2nd and 4th Monday
<u>Geology</u> Status: Active Monthly on Wednesday mornings 10:00 am–12:00 pm 1st Wednesday, with excursions on the 3rd Friday	<u>German</u> Status: Active On Monday mornings 10:00 am–12:00 pm 1st and 3rd Monday	<u>History</u> Status: Active Monthly on Tuesday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 1st Tuesday
<u>Intermediate Walking Group</u> Status: Active On Tuesday mornings 10:00 am–4:00 pm 1st and 3rd Tuesdays	<u>Latin Advanced</u> Status: Active On Monday afternoons 2:30 pm Every two weeks	<u>Latin For Improvers</u> Status: Active On Wednesday afternoons 2:30 pm Every two weeks
<u>Line Dancing</u> Status: Active Weekly on Monday afternoons 12:15 pm–1:30 pm	<u>Lunch Group</u> Status: Waiting list Monthly on Thursday afternoons 12:00 pm–1:30 pm 4th Thursday	<u>Mahjong</u> Status: Waiting list On Tuesday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 2nd and 4th Tuesday
<u>Painting & Drawing</u> Status: Active Weekly on Friday mornings 10:00 am–12:00 pm	<u>Philosophy</u> Status: Active Monthly on Monday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 4th Mondays	<u>Poetry</u> Status: Active Monthly on Tuesday mornings 10:30 am–12:30 pm 3rd Tuesday
<u>Popular Classical Music</u> Status: Waiting list Monthly on Friday afternoons 2:00 pm 3rd Friday	<u>Science</u> Status: Active Monthly on Friday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 4th Friday	<u>Short Walks</u> Status: Waiting list Monthly on Thursday mornings 10:00 am 1st Thursday
<u>Singing Group</u> Status: Active Monthly on Monday afternoons 2:00 pm–4:00 pm 2nd Monday of the month	<u>Social Supper Group</u> Status: Waiting list Monthly on Wednesday evenings 6:15 pm 2nd Wednesday	<u>Spanish</u> Status: Active On Tuesday mornings 10:00 am–12:00 pm 2nd and 4th Tuesdays
<u>Ukelele</u> Status: Active 2nd Thursday afternoon 1.30 – 3.00pm and 4th Thursday morning 10.30 – 12.00pm	<u>Walking – Longer Walks</u> Status: Active On Wednesday mornings 10:00 am–3:30 pm 2nd and 4th Wednesdays	

Group Leaders

(contact via alnwick.u3asite.uk/groups)

Archaeology	George Ellames
Architecture	Peter Carter
Art Appreciation	Sue Bairstow
Book Group 1	Meryl McConnell
Book Group 3	Cathy Robinson
Bridge	Tom Burroughs
Choir	Peter Cook
Crafts	No Group Leader
Cribbage	Shelley Willis
Family History	Anne McMillan
Food	Carollyn McDonald
French	Rosie Buxton
Geology	Bob Pass
German	Angus Russell
History	Mary Brazier, Barbara Wood
Intermediate Walking	Julie Hall
Latin (Advanced)	Dilys Carter
Latin (Improvers)	Dilys Carter
Line Dancing	Maureen Stephenson
Long Walks	John Davidson
Lunch	Shelley Willis
Mahjong	Judy Williams
Painting and Drawing	Contact Groups Coordinator
Philosophy	Anne Larvin
Poetry	Anne Graham
Popular Classical Music	Meryl McConnell
Science	Trevor Robinson
Short Walks	John Godfrey
Singing	Kyla Watson
Social Evening	Meryl McConnell
Spanish	John Craig
Ukulele	Trevor Robinson

PLEASE NOTE - if you would like to come along to a group meeting that you do not normally attend, contact the Group Coordinator at <http://alnwick.u3asite.uk/contact>. This is to safeguard any groups that are full; it is also for insurance purposes.

Safeguarding

My name is Carollyn McDonald and I hold the role of Safeguarding Officer in Alnwick u3a. I am available to listen to u3a members about any issues that have a safeguarding aspect. This includes domestic abuse; physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse. It may not be possible to keep confidentiality, but disclosure could be made with your understanding to appropriate authorities, not to other u3a members. I am a priest in the Church of England and have received full training. You can read our Alnwick u3a policy on our website.



I can be contacted via
<http://alnwick.u3asite.uk/contact>

u3a Network

Alnwick u3a has joined with the three other u3as in the north of Northumberland (Berwick, Wooler and Coquetdale) to form a network. This means that members of our u3a can freely participate in the activities of these u3as.

While each u3a will continue to give preference to their own members, this provides an opportunity to come together to pursue interests that might not make a viable group in any one u3a.

All three of our network partners have websites where you can find details of their groups and activities:

<https://berwick-upon-tweed.u3asite.uk>

<https://coquetdale.u3asite.uk>

<https://wooler.u3asite.uk>