



The vU3A Newsletter

No.028 September 2011

❖ THE EDITOR SAYS..... ❖

Hello everybody,
I would like to give very special welcome to those of you who are new to the vU3A and a big thank you for your comments on so many pages. It is good to see that you have been exploring the wiki and have found things that interest you. If you would like to add to those pages, and don't know how, there directions later on in this Newsletter or there is always someone willing to help you. You have only to go to the 'Coffee Shop' and ask.

I went walking down by the river. It is a lovely walk along the sea wall and you can see miles out towards the estuary. The water looks blue and sage green where it nears the shore. There are gulls lined up on the islands and investigating the mud flats. There dikes and freshwater lakes on the landward side of the sea wall and it is here that I saw my first egret.

Yachts with white sails are flitting over the water and the odd Jet Ski goes whizzing past them. I wonder why our rivers are not subject to the same rules as our roads?

There are rotting boats in some places like some elephants

graveyard that somewhat mar the rivers bank.

We don't leave rotting cars beside



our roads.

Looking at them again, however, they have a certain desolate, romantic look and I wonder what stories they could tell. What and who they have carried and where in the world they have been – if they could only say!

I know that on one of them there used to live an elderly gentleman called George. The boat was already beached and was distinctly unseaworthy even then.

He had three dogs on board but put up a big notice that said, '101 dogs on board – BOARDERS WILL BE REPELLED.'



He had a running battle with the council (he refused to pay council tax), with social workers and other figures of authority who felt that he should not be living there alone and happy so far from ‘civilisation’. He used to wave to me as I walked by with my little dog and

sometimes came ashore for a chat, offering me a dubious enamel mug of very black milk less tea which I felt obliged to drink.

And one day he simply disappeared.

After he and his dogs left his boat was vandalised and finally someone tried to set fire to it. Now the river and the weather are finishing the job.

I often wonder what happened to him. Did he just up sticks and go or was he finally ‘captured’ by bureaucracy and put into a home? I shall never know!

Kate – Deputy Editor
(kate904tom@btinternet.com)

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

Announcements & News.....	pages 3-4
Chair’s Corner	page 3
The National Website	page 5
Contributing to Pages and Comments.....	page 6
How to find the Groups on the wiki	page 6-7
Directory of Groups.....	pages 7-8
Background to the U3A/vU3A	page 9
Flash Meetings.....	page 9
And finally	page 10
Useful Contacts	page 10

**The deadline for copy for the next Newsletter is Sunday 25th September
Please submit to Kate Western - kate904tom@btinternet.com**

CHAIR'S CORNER

Thankfully, we have found two members who have agreed to become part of the committee. I look forward to introducing them to you in the October newsletter.

Thank you also to those who gave feedback on the report on Ian Kimber's papers. It has now been agreed by committee that this task is complete. We will, of course, be pursuing some of the issues raised as outlined in our report. My thanks go to Peter Johnston who did a considerable amount of work with me to make this happen in the timescale set out by Ian in his resolution.

We continue to work on the resolution to give short term wider access (21 days) to the wiki as a taster for the general public. John

Pettifer and Duncan Tribute are working on this.

Mike Williams is leading a group to contact all UK U3As with websites asking them to include an item to advertise vU3A. Mike has himself contacted 91 U3As and has had 53 positive responses to the effect that something will be put on websites, included in newsletters or put before committees. Other members of the team have equalled his success with the result that there has been a steady trickle of new members. Well done Mike, John, Peter and Duncan.

Please get in touch if you have any queries, questions or ideas for improving our U3A - my door is ever open.

Linda
lindavu3a@gmail.com

JUST IN CASE

Just in case you didn't know (or had forgotten!), the Virtual U3A has a website where all kinds of information is available for prospective members. Even enrolled members might find something of interest there. The website is:

<http://vu3a.org>

Now, here's the important part: When did you last introduce a prospective member to this website? Have you asked anyone at all to mention it in a newsletter? Have you seen whether your local library, GP surgery, AgeUK shop, etc. would put up a little notice? There must be dozens of ways to promote the Virtual U3A.

Every little helps!

HANDY COMPUTING TIP No.008

For some people, operations using the keyboard prove to be easier than ones with the mouse. A good way of finishing off a piece of work in Word or many other applications, when you want to save and close, is the keyboard combination CTRL + S (this will save your work) followed by ALT + F4 (this will close the window), F4 in this case being the F4 key and not F followed by 4.

FORGOTTEN YOUR PASSWORD? READ THIS!

Our former Chairman, Paul, has recently discovered what he believes to be a new service on pbworks for somebody who says they can't get access any more. You go to <https://my.pbworks.com/?p=forgot> where it asks you for your email address and when you click on "Reset password" it tells you that it has sent you an email. The email tells you where to go to enter a new password.

SAVE MONEY ON PHONE CALLS

If you are a seasoned user of the Internet you might be interested in trying out this website: www.saynoto0870.com As the name implies, you can use this website to find cheaper alternatives to 0870 and 0845 (as well as other) prefix numbers. These numbers generally involve higher call charges than geographical 01 and 02 numbers or the free 0800 numbers. By clicking on the words **Search to find an alternative number** you can type into a box the dreaded 0845 number and find out whether there are cheaper alternatives. Especially good for use with mobiles where you might have an allowance of free calls, remembering that your allowance probably does not encompass 0845 numbers.

TO ALL MEMBERS: RENEWALS

If you have received your membership renewal notice and have not yet responded will you do so straight away, please, so that our books can be brought up to date? Thank you.

TO ALL MEMBERS: CHANGES TO YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

If any of your contact details should change - **in particular your email address** - please let the Membership Secretary know, currently Cecilia Norman, clnorman@btinternet.com

THE NATIONAL U3A WEBSITE

Just in case there is anyone reading this who has not yet (a) visited the Third Age Trust's website or (b) having visited it, not succeeded in registering for the members only areas, here are some pointers.

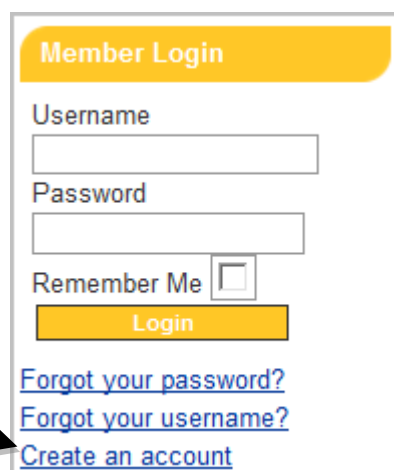
FINDING THE WEBSITE

- ❖ Go to www.u3a.org.uk
- ❖ The home page is constantly updated with the latest statistics for the totals of U3As and members nationwide and that could be of interest to some of you.
- ❖ To the left on the home page is a clickable list of other pages to visit. The illustration to the right shows a part of this list. The general public can access any of these areas, while other areas are reserved for registered users.

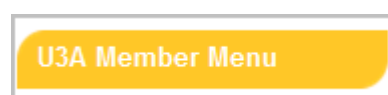


REGISTERING FOR THE MEMBERS' AREAS

- ❖ Look over to the right of the home page and you will see where to log in. The illustration shows what to look for. You should type in your Username and Password, then click on **Login**. But what if you don't have a username or password? You will need to 'create an account'. Start by clicking on those words.
- ❖ What ensues will be self-explanatory. The only personal details you will be asked for are name and email address.
- ❖ You will also create the Username and Password for future use. **It's for you to choose what these are.**
- ❖ Then you click on a button labelled **Register** and that completes the process.
- ❖ Once you are logged on, you will be able to see a new menu on the right-hand side that wasn't visible before called **U3A Member Menu**. You will now be able to access areas that were not available to you previously.



A screenshot of a 'Member Login' form. The form has a yellow header with the text 'Member Login'. Below the header are two input fields: 'Username' and 'Password'. To the right of the 'Password' field is a checkbox labeled 'Remember Me'. Below these fields is a yellow button labeled 'Login'. Underneath the button are three blue hyperlinks: 'Forgot your password?', 'Forgot your username?', and 'Create an account'. An arrow points from the text 'Create an account' in the list to the 'Create an account' link in the form.

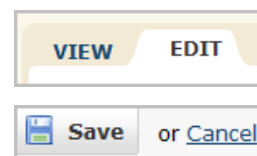


HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO WIKI PAGES

[Your Group Leader/Convenor may have specific suggestions or requirements, otherwise the following notes apply generally to all wiki pages.]

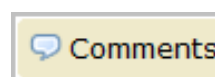
A wiki page is a communal document where members of the group collaborate in posting their contributions. Usually the page consists of two sections. We can think of the first section as being the home for the group's learning activity, while the second section can serve more as a general chat area for socialising (what these days is commonly referred to as 'social networking').

The first section (the communal page itself) **can be edited** and is generally used for contributions relevant to the nature of the group. To make an entry, you click on the Edit tab, top left of the page (illustrated), then type in much the same way as you would when word processing. When you have finished, you will need to click on the Save button which is to be found at the foot of the screen.



You can also add pictures to this first section (as can be clearly seen by visiting the Photography Group). Have a look at this page <http://vu3a.pbworks.com/How-to-upload-images> for some notes on how it is done. (These notes are shortly due to be refined and expanded.)

The second section, called **Comments**, is found immediately after the contributions in the first section. Here is where you make, well, comments on other people's contributions. Comments are not intended to form part of the main activity as such. To make a comment, press the End key or scroll right down until you reach a box labelled **Add a Comment**. Type your comment in the box and click the **Add Comment** button. Careful! Comments **cannot be edited**. Pictures cannot be added in the **Comments** section.



If you need further help, please see **Useful Contacts** on the last page of this newsletter.

GROUPS

At the heart of the U3A and vU3A ethos lies the concept of the **interest group**. Because the range of potential interest groups is so vast, there is no way to define this simply, other than as the focus for those with similar interests to come together and pursue their learning in an informal and friendly way. A visit to **Carlisle & District U3A**

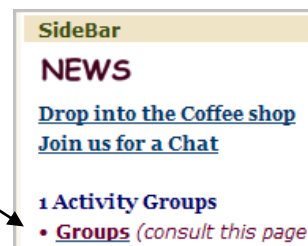
(www.carlisle-u3a.org.uk) will give an idea of the rich variety of activities typically open to U3A members.

Here, at the vU3A, we seek to encourage the notion of the informal interest group. It is what makes vU3A unique and what sets it apart from many other education providers and social networking websites.

vU3A is always on the lookout for fresh ideas and for volunteers to convene or lead new groups. If you have any suggestions or would like to take a more active role of this nature, please get in touch with any of the names on the **USEFUL CONTACTS** list on the last page of this Newsletter.

HOW TO FIND THE VU3A GROUPS

Once you are logged in to vu3a.pbworks.com simply click on the word **Groups** in the SideBar to the right of the wiki screen. From then on, follow your nose!



DIRECTORY OF GROUPS

Would all Group Leaders/Convenors please contact Mike Williams at mikandel@btinternet.com about changes you would like made to the information in this Directory.

(NB This information is liable to change at short notice.)

The following groups were alive and kicking when this issue went to press:

ART APPRECIATION (Contact: Olive Davies, oadavies@yahoo.co.uk)

Art Appreciation covers a wide range of topics e.g. What do you like and why? Exhibitions, films and the work of individual artists will all be discussed.

BOOKS BRILLIANT BOOKS (Contact: TBA)

The page for booklovers, a place to recommend a good read, to discuss a recent novel, to make friends with bibliophiles from all over.

ENCOURAGE US TO READ (Contact: TBA)

Another page for booklovers. There are plans to amalgamate this page with BOOKS BRILLIANT BOOKS. [At the time of going to press it was unclear where things stood.]

BRIDGE (Contact: Mike Williams, mikandel@btinternet.com)

Find out, by clicking on this link, how to play or watch others playing bridge online.

CRAFTS (Contact: Chris Salter, chrisvu3a@tiscali.co.uk)

There are many of us who enjoy crafting, keeping the old crafts going and investigating new ones and we can share our knowledge.

CREATIVE WRITING (Contact: Ian Kimber, ianksoulsurfer@googlemail.com)

Members submit their own prose or poetry.

FAMILY HISTORY (Contact: Chris Salter, chrisvu3a@tiscali.co.uk)

Many of us are interested in our family origins, and with the Internet it is so much easier to research. Sharing knowledge and knowhow we can get further - still waiting to find a hidden connection between two of our members.

FOOD AND DRINK (Contact: Cecilia Norman, clnorman@btinternet.com)

Recipes, shopping, restaurants, diet, food science, travel - you name it - this is open house for all those interested in such topics.

GARDENS (Contact: Linda Clark, lindavu3a@gmail.com)

If you would like advice, help, want to pass on information that you have found useful or anything about gardens or garden history that you have found interesting please join us.

HISTORY (Contact: Elizabeth, elizabeth28@talktalk.net)

The current topic is The Ten Terrible Taxes (see under History and the Present). There's another page on commemorative names. Note also the link to Local History.

INTERNET FORUM (Contact: Geoffrey Boys, geoffrey.boys@btinternet.com)

The Internet Forum can provide support for members so they can take full advantage of what the internet has to offer.

LE CAFÉ FRANÇAIS (Contact: Allen Parker, parkal@btinternet.com)

Chat in French. Le Café Français is open to all. The link can be found on the Coffee Shop page.

PHILOSOPHY (Contact: Ian Kimber, ianksoulsurfer@googlemail.com)

Some people consider that Philosophy is a very learned subject. Nothing can be further from the truth. We are all philosophers in one way or another whether we like it or not. This gives us all the right to express our experience.

PICTURES, CAMERAS & SOFTWARE (Contact: John Pettifer, john.pettifer@gmail.com)

Aims to help members to better understand how to get the best from Digital Photography and the use made of PC based software programs such as Picasa.

PICTURE PUZZLE CORNER (Contact: Peter Johnston, petervu3a@btinternet.com)

Come and see if you can recognise the pictures shown, put some up yourself! It's just a bit of fun.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY Q & A (Contact: Ian Kimber, ianksoulsurfer@googlemail.com)

A collaborative area for asking and answering a variety of questions.

TELL US A STORY - WINDMILLERS (Contact: John Wariner, wariner@waitrose.com)

Not an active group as such but a look back at the work of an early group of 'guinea pigs' when the Virtual U3A was still on the drawing board. Worth a look.

TOPIC OF THE DAY (Contact: Ian Kimber, ianksoulsurfer@googlemail.com)

Offerings of daily topics on which to comment.

WATCHING THE NATURAL WORLD (Contact: Mike Williams, mikandel@btinternet.com)

This is a group for nature lovers and weather watchers. Of particular interest are some striking photographs uploaded by members. Let's have a few more!

WATERCOLOUR PAINTING (Contact: Linda Clark, lindavu3a@gmail.com)

Watercolour painting for all - beginners welcome. All queries welcome. Practical activities available.

15th OF THE MONTH CLUB (Contact: Mike Williams, mikandel@btinternet.com)

Drop in around the middle of the month and leave a diary entry. Add your contribution to this monthly snapshot of third age living.

OTHER ACTIVITIES BESIDES THE GROUPS

Take a good look at what's available from the SideBar (that panel on the right of your wiki screen). The **Coffee Shop** is one of the most active areas, a place to meet other members and exchange chat and opinions on this and that.

There's quite a bit more. Just explore by clicking on the various links.

If you are interested in starting a group but feel that you need help or support to get up and running please contact Linda at lindavu3a@gmail.com

FLASH MEETINGS

FlashMeetings are just one of the ways in which Virtual U3A members can communicate with one another. Designed by a team at the Open University, this online videoconferencing facility can be seen at

flashmeeting.open.ac.uk

Click on the link labelled **EA-TEL FM Server** and then you can click on the **About** link to learn all about the FlashMeeting features.

There is no charge for using FM and no software to install. Everything takes place over the Internet. Users need to have audio and (ideally) video facilities on their home computer.

A full set of notes can be found at fm.ea-tel.eu/quickstart.html

Someone has to set up a meeting and others are then invited to join the meeting by following a link to it that the meeting organiser will circulate.

Help and advice can be sought from any of our **Useful Contacts** on the last page of this newsletter. There is also a page of support notes on our own vU3A wiki at <http://vu3a.pbworks.com/w/page/35214688/Flash-Meetings>

IF YOU ARE NEW TO THE vU3A

(or even if you are not)

You may like to know more about the U3A movement in the UK. Here are three suggestions for a bit of further reading.

- The national U3A website - www.u3a.org.uk
- A file about the **History of U3A** for which we have provided a link in the wiki SideBar
- www.u3a.org.uk/local-u3a-website-list.html Here you will be able to browse a list of all UK U3As that maintain a website. Visits at random to any of these websites will give a clear picture of what different U3As get up to. **Carlisle & District U3A** is a good place to start (www.carlisle-u3a.org.uk)

U3A stands for the University of the Third Age, which is a self-help organisation for people no longer in full time employment providing educational, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment. It consists of local U3As all over the UK, which are charities in their own right and are run entirely by volunteers. Local U3As are learning cooperatives which draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills of their own members to organise and provide interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership.

And vU3A (Virtual U3A) is just one more U3A but is uniquely located online rather than being terrestrially based. One of its principal aims is to provide the U3A experience for those who are rendered isolated in some way by circumstances or geography.

AND FINALLY, JUST FOR FUN.....

Here's a party trick for you.
Bet your friend(s) £1 that you will be able to sing a song containing the name of any of their friends or family they care to mention. They tell you the name. What is the song you will sing?

ANSWER NEXT MONTH

The answer to last month's question about the Olympic rings appears below. But did you answer correctly without having to look it up?



USEFUL CONTACTS

The following members have agreed to serve members of the vU3A in a support capacity. Please feel free to email them for help or advice.

Paul Baron:	paulbaron1@btinternet.com
Peter Johnston	peter.m.johnston@btinternet.com
John Pettifer:	john.pettifer@gmail.com
Duncan Tribute:	duncantribute@btinternet.com

HAVE A GOOD MONTH!

This edition was compiled by Mike Williams
mikandel@btinternet.com