

Hello all, and welcome to our Spring 2026 Newsletter

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From The Chair

Hello everyone.

Is it too late to say Happy New Year? Probably, but I've said it anyway. By the time this newsletter comes out we'll be well into the new term, and we've already had a committee meeting to discuss the year. We're already having to think about next year because venues get booked up, and about the Summer publicity and enrolment. One important task was to consider a request from some members that we extend the u3a year of 30 weeks. Your convenor may have mentioned it to you. The argument was that many people enjoy the classes so much they want more of them, and particularly in the summer period, when there is long gap between the end of one year and the start of another. After much deliberation we have decided to keep the year as it is. The main reason is one of cost and fairness to those members who only come for one class or group (about 30%). To extend the year to a school year would put about £10 on the annual fee. We're already having to look at an increase to cover the extra cost of hiring the venues, about 5%, so it felt a very radical move to increase by that amount, and we didn't want to frighten people off from joining or re-joining.

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We will try and put some extra events on in the Summer to enable members who want to get together to have something they can attend.

You may not have picked up that, for 2026, Wimborne has been selected as the Dorset Town of Culture. The Town Council has been allocated money to promote all the various clubs, societies and activities that take place, and hopefully to enhance them. In addition, there will be some additional cultural activities taking place. Information about this will be coming out in February, so please look out for it. Your committee is looking at ways in which we might contribute. We do want to get more presence for the retired and elderly people in the area. Nearly 30% of the town's population is over 69, and the proportion is increasing.

The message is that our u3a needs to do more, and work more closely with other agencies who are serving our demographic.

Remember the u3a strap-line – laugh, learn, live!

Best wishes to all

Ashley Rowlands

Group News

New Environmental programme

Committee members have been meeting with representatives of Planet Wimborne to establish a new programme which will bring together all the various environmental groups in the area. The programme will be piloted in the Summer term with five sessions from different contributors. This will be free to all members, with a view to including it in the main 2026/7 programme starting in September. The meetings will be at The Reef, Colehill at 1.00 – 2.45 on the following Mondays: 5 April; 11 May; 18 May; 1 June and 15 June.



Our Summer promotion plans

From Easter onwards we will be starting to promote our new year's programme. For your information we will be having a stall at the Allendale Centre 50th anniversary on May 17th.

The big announcement is that we have arranged a whole day Open Day at the Allendale Centre on Saturday 20th June. See below for more details

Over the Summer we will be using our normal, successful methods of publicising Wimborne u3a:

- Leaflets
- Advertising and press releases in the print media.
- Library 'drop-ins' at Corfe Mullen, Wimborne and Colehill.

u3a Spring Term 2026 Talks Series

Janice Deane is putting on a series of talks again this Spring Term.

All talks take place at Wesley Hall, Methodist Church, King Street in Wimborne at 10.00 for a 10.30 start. No booking required. Admission fee: £2 for u3a members – £4 for non-members

Friday February 20

Speaker: Dr Paul Stickler

Subject: The Green Bicycle Murder



Paul presents a British murder investigation into the fatal shooting of a young woman in Leicestershire in 1919. The case is a celebrated and controversial one. Listen to the evidence and make your own judgement.

Paul is a retired detective with a passion for history and an interest in murder investigations. His presentations are absorbing, challenging, entertaining and informative. His experience is far reaching and he is a published author.



Friday March 20

Speaker: Mr Howard Davidson

Subject: Conserving the Seas – Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone

The introduction of the Marine Conservation Zone at Studland Bay will provide much needed protection for the habitats of Studland Bay however it wasn't without its controversy. Studland is a very popular leisure hot spot and a very important anchorage for boats. The talk will go through the introduction of the conservation zone and the efforts to find a way forward for the leisure interests.

Howard is one of the boating representatives on the Studland Bay Marine Partnership. He has a background in environmental management and is a keen sailor.



NB There may be vacancies available in a few groups which were fully subscribed last term: Please contact Membership Secretary Horace Letchford for details of availability.

Our Summer u3a 'Open Day'

The big announcement is that we have arranged a whole-day Open Day in the Allendale Centre Main Hall on **Saturday 20th June 2026**.

(It's also King Charles' 75th Birthday, so who knows, he might just drop in!).

The aim is to showcase our u3a but the objective is to attract new members. We want each group to have a table and chair and be available to talk to visitors about their course or activity.

If you are the convenor and unable to make it, could you please nominate someone to represent you. For those groups eg Badminton, where there is more than one group, could those convenors agree on one person to represent the activity or subject on behalf of the rest.

We will be compiling a list over the next few weeks so we would appreciate it if you could get back to Ashley – the deadline will be the end of January.

Please email chair@wimborneu3a.org.uk

Upcoming meetings

There are a number of meetings planned for the Spring Term:

- Wimborne u3a Committee Meeting 17th March
- Convenors meeting 25th March 2:30–3:45
- Members drop-in and chat session at the Reef on 21st March 10:30–12:30. Apart from a general chat, we'd like to discuss what we might do in the Summer as extra events.

Letters to the Editor

You may remember that at the AGM, I issued an invitation to all members that we would create a 'Letters To The Editor' section for inclusion in our future Newsletters.

I have to report that not a single letter – praise or complaint – has been received either by post, email or even phone call!

Does that mean all members are happy with Wimborne u3a? Discuss...



French Self Help Group

On a Wednesday afternoon last October, our Membership Secretary spent a pleasant hour with the French Self Help group in the Liberal Hall. Each week the group take a topic on which to share and develop their French.



After being given a crib sheet on the French words for various items of clothing, we went through a short story, in French, line by line about a lady not going shopping for clothes in a clothes shop.

Nigel, the leader, had put together the story using Chat GPT and Google Translate, so that the group could read and listen to the story. With phones, computers and dictionaries at the ready everyone chipped in with their interpretation of the sentences and understanding of the phrases used.

There are still places available in the group for those who would like to practice and develop their French beyond "Bonjour".

Chained Library Spring Talks report

In front of a very good audience at the Methodist Hall on Friday 23rd January, Jayne and Mike Twomey, Senior Librarians at the Chained Library at the Wimborne Minster Church, delivered a lively, informative and at times humorous talk on one of the first public reference libraries in the country.

The talk combined a brief history of the Minster and an in-depth explanation of the second largest Chained Library in England. Jayne and Mike took it in turns to describe the origins of the Library, its two founders – both local Wimborne gentlemen – who wished to continue the original ethos of the Minster itself going back to its origins in 705 CE of education and learning. They wanted the Library open to all, but especially to the "shopkeepers and better class of people in Wimborne"!



The 2026 Monthly Talks season has got off to a tremendous start and we look forward to the next two in our Spring series: Friday 20th February "The Green Bicycle Murder" by Dr Paul Stickler about a celebrated murder mystery from 1919; and Friday 20th March "Conserving the Seas" – Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone by Howard Davidson about protection and conservation efforts in the very popular tourist area.

Both at the Methodist Hall starting at 10:30 am – doors open for coffee at 10:00 am.

See you there.

Vice-Chair steps down

As your Vice-Chair and newsletter editor, I have reluctantly decided to resign from my role as Trustee and Committee member. There are reasons for this but perhaps I can just blame age and ailments for my decision. I hope you understand.

I will still continue to edit the newsletter and give my wholehearted support to this excellent organisation and its Committee.

I'll also offer to continue as Convenor of the Monday Jazz group in the Autumn Term.

Vic Grayson

Wimborne u3a Vice-Chair