



Focusing on two decades of shared learning with U3A



Happy birthday to us...

Welcome to this special issue of The Eye, produced to celebrate 20 years of Ilkley & District U3A. We hope you enjoy it.

Although we were founded in November 1997, our celebrations are going on throughout 2017.

Two of the highlights to look out for are the U3A flowerbed outside Dale Eddison on The Grove this summer, and the Big China Tea Party in the Clarke Foley Centre on Saturday, November 18, the day of our AGM.

Traditionally the 20th anniversary is a china one so we hope that you will bring your favourite china cup, saucer and plate along to enjoy an afternoon chatting with friends over a cuppa and afternoon tea.

Put the date in your diary.

ILKLEY & DISTRICT



UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Here's to the future

Chair Sue Butler looks ahead



'We are in a great place now and for the future'

Ask not only what U3A can do for you, but also what you can do for U3A. That's the message for the future, to misquote JFK, from chair Sue Butler.

Sue, who took over from Roger Bainbridge last year, would like to see more members getting involved.

"We have got a lively, energetic and ambitious U3A," she says.

"The purpose is sharing learning and leisure activities. New interests are being generated all the time; our members have such a wealth and depth of knowledge between them.

"We are all so fortunate in the support we already have from trustees, group leaders and those who help with the nuts and bolts of our organisation such as equipment and the website, but as our membership grows we need to expand the team who keep all our activities going and enable members to pursue new interests."

The trustees have set up four groups to help promote and run our U3A and its learning activities. As Sue points out, learning is good for your health and so is friendship as we get older. With this in mind Ilkley is developing a social responsibility programme with involvement in a range of issues from dementia awareness to loneliness to befriending.

Focusing ahead, there are a growing number of links with other organisations such as involvement in film-making cinema with Leeds Beckett University; sharing activities through the Westnet network of local U3As and Bumble Bee Watch with the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.

"It's new territory and I think there is such potential to work with others," adds Sue. "We are a growing organisation where people can enjoy meeting and learning together. We are in a great place now and for the future."

And so say all of us...

"When I moved from Newcastle to Ilkley, I didn't expect to know anyone," admitted Caroline Moseley. It was at the Clarke Foley Centre she learned about the U3A and was soon enjoying, in her own words, "beautifully taught bridge, delightfully civilised literary adventures, daring recipes and favourite films." Caroline, who went on to lead her own knitting and short story groups, said she enjoyed learning in a socially benevolent atmosphere. Her verdict: "Hats off to Ilkley U3A, an organisation par excellence."

Not just a male train

Is the 60-strong Railways Group an all-male preserve of ageing train-spotters? Not a bit of it. The group boasts more than a dozen female members who are not there to keep an eye on their menfolk. As well as the organised trips away, they are just as fascinated to learn about railway advertising, the social impact of Victorian railway development, a rail journey to the Arctic Circle and the story of electrification. Still to come is a look at London's mammoth Crossrail project, one of Europe's biggest civil engineering undertakings ... and there won't be an anorak in sight.

What is Westnet?

This is a network of five U3As – Ilkley & District, Bradford, Keighley, Craven (Skipton) and Settle. Westnet members may join interest groups of the other U3As at no extra cost, providing there are vacancies. They also receive invitations to each other's events and may take part in joint functions such as quizzes, treasure hunts and ceilidhs.

Drop in, find out

Join us on the first Friday of the month from 10.30 - 12 noon at the Clarke Foley Centre, Ilkley. To find out more about us please visit:
www.ilkleydistrictu3a.wildapricot.org



Born to be wild

Intrepid members of the Motorbike Group take a break amid stunning Scottish scenery. On average, eight to ten bikers take part in the twice monthly outings. When he first proposed the group, leader Norman Jones was amazed by the response from some very able and experienced riders.

One member, Mike Fourie, recalls: "The first time 12 of us met for breakfast at my house, my wife described the atmosphere as like a bunch of children about to go on their first Sunday School picnic!"

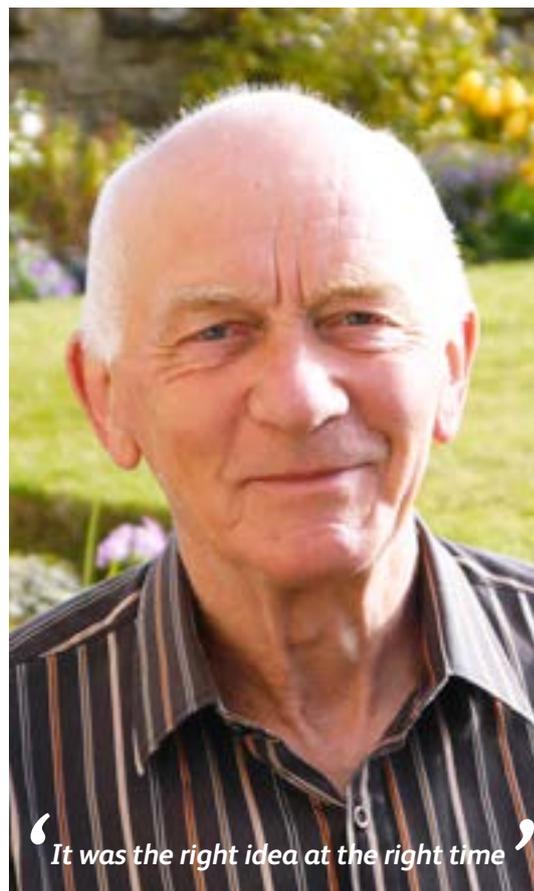
How it all began

Founder Alan Kay looks back

The town's rich mixture of third age skills and experience persuaded the Rev Sam Walden and Alan Kay to set up the University of the Third Age in Ilkley 20 years ago. They hoped it would inject new life into the Clarke Foley Centre, of which Sam was chairman and Alan, treasurer. A public meeting was called and advertised in the local press.

To their surprise and delight, no fewer than 160 people from a wide range of professions and business crammed into the 60-capacity Jack Lofthouse annex to enthusiastically welcome plans for a continued-learning facility.

Alan, who is still an active member of the U3A, said: "We formed a steering committee of six people with different abilities and experience and were given a grant of £50 by the Third Age Trust to cover initial launch costs. These came to £52!



‘It was the right idea at the right time’

"Within a year we had a paid up membership of 140 formed into 10 groups, of which the Travel Group I founded is still going.

"Knowledge of the U3A spread quickly by word of mouth and with the help of posters in libraries and doctors' surgeries. Committee members worked hard to get us off the ground and I spent hours walking round Ilkley delivering newsletters. At the outset, I was treasurer, location finder, leader finder and membership secretary, ably assisted by John Ward and our secretary, Irene Booth.

"By year four, when I stood down as chairman, we had 300 members. At that first public meeting, it was clear there was demand and interest and the U3A would succeed. It was the right idea at the right time."



Come fly with me

John Metcalfe, co-ordinator of the Aviation Group, enjoys a pilot's eye view of central London from the controls of his home flight simulator (X-Plane 11). Members of this popular group come from a variety of backgrounds, not just aviation. They explore current and historical aspects of civil or military aviation with visits to aircraft such as the iconic Concorde.

Reaching out to others

Ilkley & District U3A is keenly aware of its social responsibilities and is working hard to reach out into its community.

Here are just a few of the initiatives under way or planned:

- Loneliness study day – taking place at St Margaret's in Ilkley on August 30 this will look at some of the causes and explore ways in which U3A can help. It's open to all members.
- Dementia Friendly action plan – Awareness sessions will be held to help U3A to deal better with sufferers and their carers and enable members to continue their U3A activities for longer. All members, especially group leaders, are encouraged to attend.
- Good Neighbours – U3A is working with the Ilkley scheme to help

people live independently; offering befriending, shopping (with or for the person concerned) and practical help such as gardening or DIY.

- Community events – running stands at local events highlighting what is available and what U3A can provide.
- Pre-retirement talks – giving presentations on U3A in general to staff at Skipton Building Society outlining the opportunities on offer and showing that retirement needn't be a "black hole" of despondency and loneliness.
- Film-making for older people – linking up with Leeds Beckett University in an international project, CINAGE.
- Reading in schools – providing volunteers in primary schools.

Our U3A in Numbers

1485	The number of members today. Membership has doubled in the last eight years.
73 years old	The age that divides our membership in two. Half of us are younger and half of us are older.
2137	Based on our current growth rate, the year that everyone in the world will be a member of Ilkley & District U3A!

Love is in the U3A air

U3A's special quality for bringing people together worked its magic for two members of the Hike to Lunch Group, widower Dr Steve Walker and divorcee Chris Lynes.

Both joined after retirement, Steve from a career in the pharmaceutical industry and Chris after selling Calders Jewellers in Ilkley town centre.



Happy couple: Steve Walker and Chris Lynes met through U3A.

"I missed the camaraderie of work and joined the walking group to meet people," said Steve, who confessed to being incredibly lonely after his wife died. "Chris and I just hit it off."

"Our paths would not have crossed but for the U3A," said Chris. "Steve's friends are now my friends and we both have made many friends in this wonderful organisation."

• Another happy couple also met through U3A. They started chatting on a Northern Towns Group visit to Pickering last year and immediately "clicked."

"U3A inevitably attracts sociable people with a common desire to enjoy the opportunities that retirement brings," they said.

"It is not surprising that when members meet to explore their particular interest they have been subtly 'filtered' far more effectively than by any computer program.

"Members quickly make new friendships which sometimes can become very special. Who needs a computer?"



Hot shots: a team from the newly-formed Boules Group show their mettle in a popular weekly tournament at The Wheatley Arms, Ben Rhydding.

From Boules to Brexit

From comic opera to croquet, Ilkley & District U3A offers members a huge range of interest groups. There are more than 140 and the number is still growing, thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of co-ordinator Angie Grain.

Almost every taste is catered for in the regular get-togethers. Members wishing mental challenge can get to grips with French conversation or philosophy, while those with a sporting bent may choose popular table tennis or newly-formed boules. There is plenty for the keep fit brigade

too, from fell walking to circle dancing and Tai Chi.

Arts and crafts, literature, music, films all have their devotees as do specialist groups such as aviation, bird watching, motorbikes and railways. There is even a Brexit Group for members wishing to keep abreast of today's hottest debate.

All this is possible only with the unstinting help of group leaders, who volunteer many hours of their time each year to share with others their valuable skills and experience.

They're cock a hoop

Members have been learning to run hoops for the past 12 years thanks to Richard Lorimer, former chairman of Ben Rhydding Croquet Club.

Richard and the late John Matthews-Lane founded the Ilkley U3A Croquet Group following a proposal at the 2004 AGM.

Playing got going the following year, and after a rather nomadic existence the group came to rest at Ben Rhydding Sports Club.

These days golf croquet is proving very popular with taster days and special coaching sessions for newcomers run by Penny Clark.

Last year's course was so successful that Penny began another on Tuesday, May 16. It runs for six weeks, 2pm to 4pm. So if you fancy wielding a mallet, sign up on the website.



Winning ways: Libby Dixon, left, with the Richard Lorimer Shield, and Penny Clark and Marion Cofield with their trophy at the club's internal championships.

Regional role

Angie Grain is preparing to share her experience with U3A members across the region.

She has been a member of the Ilkley & District U3A committee since 2011 and will complete her six-year stint this autumn.

Recently she was elected a member of the Yorkshire and Humberside regional committee and is planning to become a regional volunteer (RV) – a troubleshooter who supports and helps U3As start up or deal with issues or challenges.

Angie, whose main role within Ilkley U3A is co-ordinating interest groups, is a passionate advocate for U3A and believes the Ilkley branch is a wonderful example of what can be achieved. Now she hopes to spread some of the secrets behind that success!

Well travelled

Founder Alan Kay was leader of the Travel Group for 14 years, during which time he arranged and led 18 visits overseas, mainly to Third World countries.

He recalled one particular visit to Vietnam in 2008: "In Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) crossing the road can be a daunting experience because of the thousands of motorbikes driving at speed in a constant stream. Our guide advised us to 'just walk across the road slowly and deliberately and they will avoid you'. So, clutching hands, and with trepidation, we stepped out and eventually arrived safely on the other side.

"All but one of us; she had become detached from the group and was stranded in the middle of the road surrounded by speeding motorcycles. Fortunately, she remembered the guide's advice, plucked up courage and walked slowly to safety. I breathed a sigh of relief."

Debut play

One of last year's most memorable theatrical productions sprang from the creative fusion of the U3A Crime Readers Group, writer Bernie Crosthwaite and actor/director Len Taylor. When Bernie, already an established short story writer and crime novelist, showed Len her first play, he persuaded Ilkley Literature Festival Fringe Committee to let him stage it with an all-Yorkshire cast. Their collaboration led to *All We Know Of Heaven*, playing to enthusiastic audiences in the Playhouse Wildman Theatre in September.