



CRAVEN u3a NEWSLETTER

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Dates for your diary:

14 March & 11 April – Monthly meetings at Champions, 10 for 10.30

21 March – 1980s Disco, Skipton Community Sports Hub

13 May – AGM, 2pm at Skipton Community Sports Hub

23 & 24 July – Summer Programme at Ermysted's.

The Annual General Meeting

Craven u3a's AGM is moving to a new location at the Skipton Community Sports Hub, to be held on 13 May 2026 at 2pm. More details to follow

Next year's Programme

We are busy preparing next year's Programme. Can you help by facilitating a new group activity? Please contact me or Wendy Brown.

Anne.f.macdonald@btinternet.com or wendywoo22@gmail.com

Thank you to everyone who responded to my request for newsletter articles. They will all be used over the forthcoming issues. Please keep them coming - I need more! - *Ed.*

The York Festival



The National u3a Festival at York 2026 will take place Wed 1 July - Friday 3 July. It is a three-day celebration of fun, learning and the community that makes u3a so special.

Explore an existing interest or take the leap and try something completely new in member-led workshops and sessions. Surrounded by other members, you will have opportunities to move your body, be creative and explore new ideas.

The Festival 26 team have developed a programme that covers sport tournaments, artistic workshops, musical performances and talks on a wide range of subjects. It will be everything members do at u3a on a daily basis - only on a larger scale and in one place. For a programme preview [click here](#).

The University of York has a beautiful campus with green spaces and a lake, fantastic sports facilities, lecture halls, and workshop rooms - the perfect backdrop for three days of inspiration and learning.

If you'd like to be involved in volunteering at the Festival by leading a workshop or being a steward, please get in touch by emailing festival@u3a.org.uk

Ticket options are a 3 day ticket (£50) or individual 1 day ticket (£18). Festival accommodation on campus is already full. There is more information and the booking form [here](#).

Mick Richings, Chair

Confession of a Slot Machine Gambler

There were some tears at the end of February's monthly meeting, after hearing Paul Isherwood tell us the very moving story of how, as a 10 year old boy in Blackpool, he became a gambling addict, after accidentally seeing a man celebrating a win on a slot machine during a school trip. Very quickly gambling became the most important thing in his life. Every penny Paul had legitimately (school lunch money, birthday gifts, paper round wages) went on the machines in the arcades, and when the money ran out, as it always did, he turned to begging, lying and stealing to feed his addiction. He played truant, and didn't feel like eating; his promising future as a footballer went down the drain too. The adults in his life didn't know what was going on. His mother thought he might be sniffing glue, but eventually, when Paul was 14, she found out, and in desperation she telephoned the Samaritans.

They put her in touch with Gamblers Anonymous, who sent someone round to see Paul at home, just before Christmas 1986. Paul said that what he was told that evening went in one ear and out the other. But a few weeks later he was taken to a GA meeting, where he was shocked to see normal-looking people, who in their turn were shocked to see someone as young as Paul. They each stated their names and when they had last gambled. Some gave dates decades ago. Paul had to say he had last gambled "at 4 o'clock". The penny dropped, and this time not into a slot machine: he realised he wanted to stop.

Paul concluded his talk by simply announcing "My name is Paul and the last time I gambled was 6 January 1987".

Liz Morrison

Save the date!

The Craven u3a orchestra will not be able to give a formal annual concert in Skipton this year but we did not want to disappoint our regular audience. We would like to invite you to an informal concert in Embsay Village Hall on Wednesday 25 March. Starting at 2.30 we will be playing a selection of the music we have enjoyed during this season. It may not be quite as polished as in past performances but we hope you will enjoy it too. Tea and cakes will be available from about 3.30. There may also be some teatime music from the u3a jazz improvisation group.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Sue Stidworthy

Skipton in Bloom

As many u3a courses end in March, some members might be looking for something to fill the gap between spring and autumn. For those interested in gardening, Skipton in Bloom meets on the first Wednesday of the month, from 9.30 am until c. 12 noon at the Diamond Jubilee Community Garden on Newmarket Street, Skipton (opposite St Andrew's Church). The next meet-up will be on 1 April and if anyone would like to join our small community group with general maintenance they can just turn up, armed with gardening gloves, small gardening tools and refuse bags. Alternatively, we can be contacted through the Skipton in Bloom Facebook page. We'd be delighted to welcome some new volunteers!

Dee Pollitt



Committee Matters

Business Secretary

Linda Hoole will have completed 3 years as Business Secretary this May and will be standing down from the role.

Therefore the committee would love to hear from anyone who is interested in taking on the position. It is an important but not onerous role, requiring someone who is well-organised, with competent typing skills and knowledge of Word.

Whoever takes on this role will have the full support of the committee, and is welcome to shadow Linda in her remaining months in the role. Examples of minutes can be accessed on the website.

Here is the role description: [Business Secretary Role Description.docx](#)

Committee Members

We are always pleased to welcome new members to the committee, bringing fresh ideas and enthusiasm! In particular, we would be keen to hear from anyone with an interest or experience in marketing and/or IT, and to reflect our membership we also need MEN to step up please.

For more information, please contact either Linda (lindahoole@yahoo.co.uk) or Mick Richings (Chair@cravenu3a.org) to arrange a chat about the roles.



The 2-hour walking group at Bingley Five Rise Locks last Tuesday

Fifty ways to play

Podcasts seem to be like buses. You wait for ages then three come at once. - except on Sundays in Skipton. But they're not all the same shape and colour and they're definitely going in different directions. We had a gap over Christmas but hopefully the wheels are rolling again.

In January we did a graphic podcast about the Japanese prints in Cliffe Castle:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6Y04ymmmK4B5NJAfzNqPT5?si=ff1b209320a74b76>

Then in February we started with an illuminated discussion of art in Vietnam with local artist Bridget March talking to Alison Gadre:



<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1XVDTzoKVMQMDCCqjb5pL?si=2f9db9f88c0049a9>



Bridget has a gallery in Crosshills: [Bridget March](#) and her works are very impressive. Bridget is also involved with Craven Art Centre in Otley Street, Skipton:

This was followed by a high energy description of the Settle Carlisle Railway 150th anniversary this year by Anna Jackson, in conversation with Ann Busfield and Paul Haywood:



<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6c7AbFcVanvw1VxQxdEK40?si=a6904f82ea2b4059>



The most recent production is Experiences in Volunteering with a joint discussion between Wendy Brown, Jay Cundall Walker, Dave Fox and Carol Boothman, who all enchant with enthusiasm about the rewards of volunteering (no coercion was required to do this) :

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7uZCzOib7NpfCqO39hxQTx?si=c4d8709b4e1f431a>

It has been a real pleasure to record these chats. I have the easy part – I just sit and listen to friends enjoying a friendly chat.

All these podcasts are available on Spotify – just search for Craven u3a:
<https://open.spotify.com/show/0jfMj4M5rO00cjstAzq3rh?si=1b4e964f17704446>



After you have listened to a podcast, click on the “Like” button and your friends will also be alerted to the podcast. Also, if you press the “Bell” (indicated in this screengrab with a red arrow) you will get an alert when a new podcast is posted.

All these podcasts can be listened to live, or better still, downloaded to your phone so you can listen to them when you have time to kill.

The podcasts are also posted on the Craven u3a News WhatsApp channel. So again if you subscribe to this channel you will get an automatic alert when new podcasts are posted. Here is the link to join:

<https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029Vb6zPHeK0IBITFa0IV3I>

That’s all we have on the timetable for now but we need to be preparing for the Spring and Summer timetables. **We really need your help to produce more podcasts in different areas.** The early ones have concentrated on

art because I am a member of Culture Vultures and Wendy has been very patient and supportive. **Please contact me if you are interested in making a podcast.** All you need to do is talk – preferably a conversation between two or three people for 30 to 60 minutes. You don't need to worry about the techy stuff – I look after that.

There must be 50 ways to do a podcast. So step on the bus Gus, get a new plan Jan, you don't need to be coy Joy, and set yourself free to help me bring out some new podcasts. Please send me, Doug Hirst, (helpful) suggestions: doug.hirst@btinternet.com

Below is a 40 word poem for you, as it is 80 years since Nagasaki (9th Aug. 1945). It is a modification of the last few lines of my poem written on the top of Coniston Old Man 20 years ago.

40 Line poem for Craven u3a. Nov. 2025.

NAGASAKI

When Nagasaki bodies were mixed with grime
this was surely a heinous war crime.
Hiroshima might be justified
else allied forces would have died –
but a second bomb just three days later
didn't give time for Jap minds to alter.

Douglas Goode

Calendar Girls!

I know many Craven U3A members came to Skipton to see my production of Calendar Girls the Musical. But if you missed it, or would like to see it again, there is another opportunity coming soon. Calendar Girls appears again at Ilkley Playhouse April 22 – May 2.

Like many of you, I am old enough to remember the original 'Alternative WI Calendar' published in 1999. What a revelation it was! I bought copies of it for all my best friends and thought of it as quite a rebellious gesture at the time. Since then, the wonderful ladies of Rylstone WI have gone on to raise millions of pounds for research into blood cancers, and nude calendars have been copied all over the world. I applaud the Calendar Girls for their brilliant idea, especially because I, too, lost a partner to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in 1992, aged only forty-two.



This real-life story has inspired a film, a play and now, finally, a musical. I firmly believe that this is the best version and if you come to see it, you will be amused, entertained and surely moved by this story of bravery and resilience.

Grassington Players quite rightly presented the world amateur premiere of this musical in 2021, and I am delighted to say that three members of that original cast join us at the Playhouse. Mike Gilroy, our Musical Director was also MD for the premiere. As for me, I was due to direct it, but Covid delayed it twice and by the time the third date was set I was too busy at Ilkley Playhouse to do the job. But here we are now, bringing the musical back to the Playhouse with a flash and a bang! I do hope you will be able to support us, as we will be supporting Blood Cancer UK.

Jamesine Cundell Walker

National u3a Online events

Here's just a sample of what's on offer, available from your nearest armchair!

London Thames Bridges – Tuesday 17 March at 2pm

The Climate Crisis and Some Solutions – Friday 20 March at 2pm

The Cancer research revolution and reasons for optimism – Tuesday 24 March at 11 am

Laughter yoga: 31 March at 3.30 pm

Staying Safe Online: Friday 10 April at 10 am

Cryptic crosswords for beginners: 6 session course – starts Wed 22 April at 10 am

To register for these events on Zoom visit [here](#) and click on the event you are interested in. You will then be able to reserve a spot.

Speakers at forthcoming monthly meetings

March 14 - Jenny Allison, MSc, Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner & Coach

Beyond Limits Thriving with Pain: Helping you move past pain, reclaim confidence, live boldly

April 11 - Life and Times of Will Shakespeare in his life and death month. Organised by the Stripey Badger bookshop, Grassington

May 9 - Stuart Atkins Band leader and music expert.

The Great American Songbook Talk with keyboard performance of famous songs by Porter and others

June 13 - Graham Mitchell from Richard III Society'

Presentation with 50 slides on Richard: The Northern King

Come along at 10am for coffee and cake before the talks start at 10.30. £3.00 contribution.

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