

Subject **Your National Newsletter - June** 📧
From Sam at National Office <info@u3a.org.uk>
To Derek <webmaster@buckinghamu3a.org.uk>
Date 2020-06-17 18:00



See your latest U3A Newsletter for June 📧

** June

Rita Fidler of Thame and District U3A made a quilt representing this time.

Dear Derek,

U3A members have been resourceful, innovative and supportive of each other and the movement over this long lockdown period. We hope this is reflected in our new film which you can see below.

Across the nations we are beginning to see a gradual loosening of lockdown, and the slow road to a new normality begin. We are keeping a careful watch as the governments from all of the nations and islands change the regulations and guidelines and will be updating you as things change.

Some very small outdoor groupings in some of the nations (within the guidelines) are beginning, with Guernsey in the Channel Islands being the first U3A where lockdown has been entirely lifted by the authorities there, the States of Guernsey. We will be with you all the way in this journey.

Please keep your ideas coming in for lockdown. There remain large areas of the movement who are unable to meet others, and please share your experiences where you are beginning to meet outdoors where this is permitted.

Please keep sharing your thoughts and aspirations for the future (mailto:national.office@u3a.org.uk) with us.
With regards,

Sam Mauger
Chief Executive
In this issue...

U3A Film
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National Awareness Days

While we have decided to wait until next June to celebrate U3A Day – see Sue Stoke's article lower down the newsletter, there have been lots of significant awareness days and weeks this month with U3A supporting Volunteer Week and Carers Week.

We have launched our U3A Film during Loneliness Awareness Week as a show of support and connection during this time.

Upcycling Day is on 24 June – so if anyone had taken on a recycling project do let us know (mailto:elleanor.mair@u3a.org.uk) , because we'd love to share it.
Your Stories

Josephine Cutts who runs the Art group for Edwalton, Gamston & District U3A asked members to help assemble a multi disciplinary project on the subject of Trees – involving photos from the photography, writing and painting groups.

Josephine is now coordinating one on Gardens and this time plans to involve the wine group too! Read more on this on Sources online. (<http://https://sources.u3a.org.uk/>)

Josephine is very keen for other U3A's to become involved in developing their own multi-disciplinary projects or in suggesting ideas for future projects.
If your U3A does start any projects, please contact Liz (mailto:elizabeth.drury@u3a.org.uk?subject=Multi-disciplinary%20projects) in the National Office Comms Team.

** News from the Trust

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBSfUGiszz0>
U3A Life in Lockdown film

** New U3A Film

We are so excited to launch the movement's film today in the newsletter – U3A Life in Lockdown.

During this period, the movement has stepped up to find creative ways to keep in touch, keep learning and stay connected. This isn't a time to celebrate but we did want to reflect the amazing ways you have adapted to the pandemic.

It is only a snapshot – there are so many of you doing so many great things we couldn't include everyone – but more than anything, we wanted to showcase the shared endeavor that is the U3A movement.

Your Stories

"I have really enjoyed this newsletter. Very interesting to see what is going on. I looked at the first Learn to play the recorder session and thought it was very good, informative and at a slow pace suitable for me! I may just try to learn to play. I've been enjoying Derby 's weekly ukulele group via zoom, which regularly has 30+ attendees".

Val - Derby U3A

** Don't Forget Bitesize for June

We've had some really positive feedback on a new bite size newsletter for those of you who don't have email.

The bitesize newsletter is so that nobody misses out on what is happening across the movement.

In PDF form it means members who are signed up can download- print off - and pop through a colleague's door. Please keep encouraging colleagues on email to sign up to receive it directly.

Bitesize Newsletter (https://mcusercontent.com/656ad5962b370cc9e2731d1ed/files/87c791ca-065c-4a57-8fb2-cd6c7ff5e093/U3A_June_Bitesize_Newsletter.pdf)

** Social Media News

** We're now on Instagram

U3A now has an Instagram account. We have been looking to increase our social media footprint and Instagram allows the movement to have a voice among a different audience. See our account and join here. (<https://www.instagram.com/u3auk/>)

We're so excited to share your amazing photos on a new platform. To be featured on our Instagram account, please send photos to us (mailto:eleanor.mair@u3a.org.uk?subject=Instagram) - we especially want to see the ways that you're remaining connected during lockdown.

<https://www.facebook.com/u3auk/>
https://twitter.com/U3A_UK
<https://www.instagram.com/u3auk/>
<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheU3a>
Your Stories

"I would like to say a big thank you to everyone on the Keeping In Touch Facebook. At a time when I can't see my friends and family it's been lovely to have so many new, nice, kind people to converse with.

I've laughed at the jokes, admired the floral and country pictures and some of the great craft items.

In a time when no one knows how everything is going to turn out, I've enjoyed the support of people from U3a's all over the country and further afield".

Stella, a member of the U3A Keeping In Touch Facebook Group. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/U3AKeepingInTouch/>)

** Volunteer News

** U3A Foyle Awarded Highest Accolade in the UK

U3A Foyle in Northern Ireland has been honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service - the highest accolade a voluntary group can receive in the UK.

The U3A's volunteers were praised for their work in "providing a full programme of classes and activities to keep retirees active and involved".

See more on this story on our website here (<http://https://www.u3a.org.uk/component/content/article/197-covid-19/689-u3a-foyle-awarded-highest-volunteer-accolade-in-uk?Itemid=490>) .

Photo Credit: Foyle U3A's Flamenco Dancing group.

** #WeVolunteerU3A

We want to showcase our Volunteers all year round because we wouldn't have U3A without them.

We have created a template where you can tell us about key characteristics in your life and your volunteer roles. A gallery of those who have already taken part and the templates can be found soon on our website. (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/>) So keep checking the website!

** We Need You ☆

The Third Age Trust is recruiting volunteers to join our fantastic teams including PR roles for Communications; Beacon Trainer; Regional Support volunteers. See PR Volunteer roles in the media news below.

For more information and a chat about roles please email Jane at NOVolunteer@u3a.org.uk (mailto:NOVolunteer@u3a.org.uk?subject=Volunteer%20Roles)
Your Stories

Boldon and District U3A have brought in a number of creative lockdown innovations
Chair, Stephanie Yearnshire said, "The group leader of the Contemporary Music Group (40-50 members) has been preparing a weekly music podcast of music together with a music quiz.

Our Gardening Group Leader sends out regular gardening dispatches plus exceptional pictures of members plants and gardens which they actively send to her. And I have been researching and editing a 'Stephanie's Gossip Column' for the last twelve

weeks sending it out to sixty people.

It is meant to be informative (learning) and funny.

PDF Example of Stephanie's Gossip Column (https://mcusercontent.com/656ad5962b370cc9e2731d1ed/files/1dec3cfe-3fe9-41a7-9fbb-b0a03878023a/Stephanie_Gossip_Column_Ninth_Edition.pdf)

**** Mr Motivator**

"Just to let you know that both I and my son who has disabilities (I am a carer) have enjoyed the Mr Motivator videos. (<http://https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fMq1bXCbMY&list=PLsB2t41TNozHaM3tH5SzD6J5tiHMhrjxP>) We love his energy, his enthusiasm, his colourful outfits, and the exercise level is pitched just right - thank you. We are still doing them." - Dee, Leigh Estuary U3A

**** Trust Learning Projects**

**** U3A Eye**

The two themes this month, 'This is Me' and 'Inside' have resulted in the witty, creative and beautiful submissions we've come to expect from U3A Members.

The below photos are Peter Marrs, Jeannie Moore (This is Me), Brian Snelson and Ian Weatherley (Inside.)

See the galleries here (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/u3a-eye>), and submit your photos for our latest theme, 'Beginning with a "T".'

**** Creative Writing Competition**

We're into the last few days of this national creative writing competition.

The deadline is 12 noon on the 19 June, so there is still time to submit your 1500 words on the theme of 'time'. The competition is based on the successful Wales creative writing competition, also currently open for entries.

You can see the full set of rules and the submission portal for the national competition are here (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/creative-writing-2020>) . (<http://https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/creative-writing-2020>) We are delighted to be supported by Bloomsbury for this competition. Each of the regional winners will receive a copy of the Writers' and Artists' Yearbook 2021.

The overall winner will receive £50 to spend on the Bloomsbury website, and will have their article featured in Third Age Matters, alongside a bespoke commissioned illustration.

They will also receive a framed copy of their work as it will appear in the magazine. You still have time to pen your entry so please get involved.

**** Your Inspiring Diary Project**

Thank you so much for continuing to contribute to the U3A Diary Project and for all the entries sent in so far.

We hope you are finding the task of diarising your experiences to be cathartic and helpful in adding structure to your daily or weekly routine.

You can now see the reflections of others every month on the website here (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/diary-project-2020/diary-project-extracts>)

We are also inviting members to take part in a mini social media 'quick diary' activity. See more here

If you would like support or advice on using social media please feel free to contact us at communications@u3a.org.uk (mailto:communications@u3a.org.uk?subject=Using%20Social%20Media%20-%20Diary%20Project)
Your Great Ideas

Hilary Jones, Chair Development Committee said, "A virtual cocktail party - live concert on Zoom - ukulele group strumming in the garden! These are a few of the wonderful ways members and U3As are keeping connected during lockdown.

You can read the full article from Hilary on Sources. (<https://sources.u3a.org.uk/>)

How have you stayed connected during the lockdown? We would like to hear so we can share it with our wider U3A community. hilary.jones@u3a.org.uk (mailto:hilary.jones@u3a.org.uk?subject=Staying%20connected%20during%20lockdown)

**** Made it! Make it!**

Many U3A members have been using lockdown as a time to get creative, whether completing long-term projects or by sewing PPE or face masks as part of a local community effort.

Some of the amazing things U3A members have made can be seen on the gallery for Made it Make it - along with details of how you can make it and stories behind the process.

See the gallery here ([www.u3a.org.uk/learning/made-it-make-it](http://https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/made-it-make-it)) <http://https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/made-it-make-itand> submit what you've been making.

Photo credit: Kevin Daniels, Pam Spencer.

** Advice News

** A New Section in the Advice Centre

U3A continues to follow Government and NHS guidance with the latest advice being sent to committees on 03 June 2020. You can see the guidance and a link to our new training video for Trustee Inductions here (<https://mailchi.mp/u3a.org.uk/em-05-03-20-special-mailing-coronavirus-guidance-and-trustee-induction-video>) .

A zoom meeting discussion takes place on Monday 29 June 11:00-12:45. To join this please ensure you have watched the video first. To register please email: NoVolunteer@u3a.org.uk (mailto:NoVolunteer@u3a.org.uk)

We have created a new category in the advice area (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice>) called Running your U3A during Covid-19.

This new area pulls together the advice which is specific to U3As during the pandemic including advice on AGMS, insurance and risk assessments for outside and remote activities.

You will need to use your member login as you would normally do for any information in your U3A dedicated advice area. (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/advice>)

** Community Connections

** The Great Get Together

This weekend (June 19 - 21) marks the fourth annual Great Get Together in memory of the murdered MP Jo Cox. Great Get Together events will be taking place in communities all across the country.

Physical distancing means we cannot 'get together' in quite the same way as in previous years, but we can still connect together and we continue to stand together in our shared values.

For more information visit www.greatgettogether.org.

** Scam Awareness

Thorpe Bay U3A member Barry Linton wanted you to know about the latest advice on scams as he continues as the liaison between Essex Police and Essex U3As.

Barry said, "Every week I get special alerts from EP and also the Regional Serious Crime Unit. I send them out with a commentary to our members at Thorpe Bay U3A, and the Association of Essex U3As sends them out to all the other county U3As.

I also still act as a point of contact for any of our members who may have received something they believe to be suspicious. Indeed there has been some frightening blackmail stuff doing the rounds recently.

Barry wanted to share more widely the important alert attached regarding Track and Trace. Read more about Track and Trace Scam (https://mcusercontent.com/656ad5962b370cc9e2731d1ed/files/a4f35cf7-34f6-46a3-88f1-c6ff136fd5c5/EFAS_29.05.2020_NHS_TRACK_TRACE.pdf)

** U3A Online

** Potters Bar U3A Radio Group

Potters Bar U3A has set up a U3A Radio Group for members who wish to be involved in various aspects of radio.

Potters Bar Radio operates two stations. PBR1 caters for general interest programming whilst PBR2 is used for more niche material. Members will be involved with both stations.

The PBR team are pre-recording and broadcasting from their own homes during lockdown.

You can see more on Potters Bar Radio here (<https://u3asites.org.uk/potters-bar/page/33073>) .

** Dulwich and District U3A Showcase

Dulwich and District U3A held a special online event as lockdown meant they had postponed their March and April Open Meetings.

Committee member Neil said, "It included a poetry reading, a self-scoring Quiz, a piano recital, a resumé of women impressionist artists, a creative writing story, and a 3-hander play-reading from Alan Ayckbourn's 'Bedroom Farce'. Our Zumba leader arranged to have some warmup exercises to kick start the show. Dulwich and District is now preparing for their next Showcase event "On With the Show!" on the 25 June.

See this story in full on our website. (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/>)

Writers of the Third Page

Barnsley U3A creative writing group have not let lockdown stifle their creativity. Each week group convenor Mac Mckechnie (and published author himself) writes the first chapter of a story, and each member of the group sets about writing Chapter 2 of the story.

The group then share and read their extracts with each other online and vote for their favorite. There are guest judges each time too who help choose the Author of the week. See the full story on Sources Online (<http://www.sources.u3a.org.uk>)
Your Great Ideas

Bob Newport of Canterbury and District U3A started a YouTube channel where he shared videos about physics with his U3A. He has made 21 'Physics in the House' videos, with good feedback from U3A members. His videos can be viewed here (<https://www.youtube.com/user/BobNewport2001>) .

Cestria U3A's Senior Singers group, pictured here before lockdown, have been continuing via Zoom. One of its members, Margaret said, "We all enjoy singing and they say that singing is good for mental health and the heart - who knows? Anyway we all enjoy it. During lockdown we have been meeting once a week via Zoom and it has been great fun. Everyone has said how much they enjoy the get together."

Macclesfield U3A Photography Group set up a Group 'Dropbox' where members can store, view and comment on each other's photos. They plan to build an archive for each year from new and older photos.

See their website here (<https://u3asites.org.uk/macclesfield/page/26739>) .

Photo: Pamela Carr

** Online Plays

Reigate and Redhill U3A's Drama Group have created a play, filmed entirely on Zoom. 'The Front Window' can be seen on their YouTube channel. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fx10vCp0XEE&feature=youtu.be>)

** News from the Board

** Chair of the Third Age Trust Ian McCannah

As with many U3As Committees, the Trust has had to think about the arrangements for its annual AGM in August.

It became obvious very early into lock down that the three day AGM and Conference planned for Nottingham in August would have to be cancelled. Government guidance on social distancing, plus the age profile of attendees, meant that bringing 400 members to such a meeting was never going to be realistic.

So we have decided to hold a Virtual AGM on 29 September.

The details will be sent to business secretaries imminently. It is hoped that this new format will allow more members than normal to participate in the AGM.

If this format proves successful, consideration will be given to future AGM's being "hybrid" - allowing U3As to share the experience of a physical one once this is possible".

Thanks to all those readers who have responded to my request last month for thoughts on how to ensure that the movement remains relevant to existing and new members once COVID-19 is behind us. There is still time to send them to me (mailto:ian.mccannah@u3a.org.uk) so that they can be included in a report to members later in the summer.

Sally Lang of Wigan U3A has been creating drawings featuring animals reimagined as lockdown characters.
Pandemic

So now at last the truth is crystal-clear,
That truth that Donne so ardently proclaimed,
That no man is an island in himself -
A solitary unit, snug, complete -
But everyone irrevocably bound
Together in the human family;
And all the quaint distinctions that we make
Of wealth or culture, colour, class or creed.
To which we cling to reassure ourselves,
Exposed for the illusions that they are.
The grim statistics cut us down to size:
Despite the progress made by human thought -
Discoveries, inventions, power to heal,
The giant leaps that brilliant minds have made,
Amazing breakthroughs into realms of new
And endless-seeming possibility -
We know at last how fragile our control
How vulnerable, finally, we are.
This enemy does not discriminate,
Cares not for prince nor pauper, no one is
Immune, none insulated from the threat
To democratic human frailty.

-Jill, St Helens U3A

A special article exploring more of your poetry will be coming soon on Sources (sources.u3a.org.uk)

** Finance News

** Finance Manager Kevin Traynor

Thank You

May I say another big thank you for your continuing support especially during this lockdown period. The many kind wishes you have sent through the post and via email are very much appreciated.

Apology

I would also like to say sorry for my delay in answering many of your enquiries, I will respond to them all as soon as I can but it has been a very busy period over the last month or two.

I will reply more fully in due course but my brief comments to some of your regular questions follow:

Group Finances

- All funds received belong to the U3A, this includes group receipts
- The Trustees are responsible for the safe keeping of all assets and these include cash and bank balances
- All bank accounts should be managed by the Trustees who should be named on the bank mandate

Local U3A Membership/Finances

- It is for the local U3A to decide if it wishes to change its annual subscriptions as a result of the effect of Covid-19 on local activities
- I would advise that U3As check their annual commitments and reserves for this year and next before effecting any change

Advice about Holidays and Trips

I was so sorry to hear that many of you have lost money and your holiday/trip as a consequence of the restrictions and I know many of you are still waiting for refunds to which you are entitled.

In addition a number of organisers and committee members have had to try and deal with the fallout. I will follow up on this in due course to see if we can be better prepared in the future.

- The Trust's insurance policies do not cover loss of deposits
- Always try to have members book the holiday direct with the provider and not through the U3A
- Wherever possible pay for the trip/holiday with a credit card
- Wherever possible use an ABTA Registered Agent (<http://www.abta.com/help-and-complaints/frequently-asked-questions/what-covered-under-abtas-consumer-financial>)

We may not be able to go on holiday but members have been sharing amazing photos from their walks and outings.

** Travel

Some of you have been asking about travel. Clearly currently travel is not possible, many of you are hoping that by 2021 some travel may be possible. Some of the providers that you have used have been in touch with us and this is what they have said.

Riviera Travel have confirmed that the U3A grant scheme is now operational, following renewal of their annual ATOL membership, and that their adverts will continue to appear in TAM.

A spokesman for Riviera Travel said, "We believe that exploring the world is one of life's gifts. And Riviera Travel are here for you and your group when you are ready to explore the world again. Your safety and wellbeing are our top priority."

There is more travel news in the Summer issue of Third Age Matters magazine. There are offers available from Great Rail Journeys, Revitalise. Jona Tours, OneTraveller and Preferred Travel Services. See all the details in the latest edition of Third Age Matters.

What are your favourite holiday moments? Your favourite place and why? Perhaps you have been on a trip of a lifetime already and want to share it? Third Age Matters magazine wants to know. Please get in touch with Joanne Smith (mailto:joanne.smith@u3a.org.uk?subject=Favourite%20Holiday%20Moments) to be considered for inclusion in a feature for the next issue of Third Age Matters magazine.

** Trust U3A

** Trust U3A is growing!

Six new interest groups are about to go live - Book Club; General History; More Fun with Maths; Music, Fashion and Youth Culture 1950s - 1960s; Spanish 1: Beginners; Spanish 2: Developing Skills.

Two courses are also about to be announced - An Introduction to Ancient Egypt: A course for Beginners and a Drawing Workshop.

Keep up to date by visiting the Trust U3A website (<https://u3asites.org.uk/trustu3a/groups>)

** U3As in the Media

Barnsley U3A's Ukelele Group (Stringalongs) were on BBC Radio Sheffield on what would have been U3A Day - 3rd June. One of their members, Kevin Draper, talked about how the group used Zoom to play together from their homes.

Minehead U3A, John Batt has attached an interview he gave on his local radio which is a good description of how the U3A works.

Kennet U3A featured in a local news site for the way that they are embracing digital methods to keep in touch with their U3A members.

Have you considered reaching out to your local press about how your U3A is keeping connected?
PR Advisor Role (https://mcusercontent.com/656ad5962b370cc9e2731d1ed/files/8b63ea21-11e6-4e29-9d8b-f58eb7948993/PR_Adviser_U3A_53098_.pdf)

** Third Age Matters

** Calls out from TAM

Third Age Matters is planning some really interesting features in its next edition in September. And wondered if you could help?

Do you have a tech question or area of tech they'd like explained for our tech wizard James Day to answer in the September issue of TAM?

Have you rescued a dog since you retired? Third Age Matters wants to know your rescue doggy stories!

And did you meet your other half through the U3A? Are you willing to share your romantic story with other members?

Please contact TAM editor Joanne Smith (mailto:joanne.smith@u3a.org.uk) on any of the above.
Your Stories

U3A 'shuffleathon'

As I haven't attempted to run for over 20 years, I decided a very slow jog round back garden (secluded fortunately)- a total of 100 metres per lap- would be appropriate; so trained 3x then did a 26 lap (plus a victory lap!) on Marathon Day in April. As you may guess my Cat was only witness, and would not ring the bell on my summerhouse (my lap counter). He was rather bemused by whole event!
Glyn, member of Southport U3A.

** Events

** Plans for Science Network Meeting 2021

Michaela Moody, Chair of U3A Science Network Organising Team, said, "One thing I'm certain of is that COVID-19 has encouraged a growing interest in science which will determine how much of our future activities will be affected.

We have refunded the fees to members who had booked for the 2020 meeting and, in the hopes that there will be a meeting in 2021, we have updated the website.

By October, we may see a different perspective emerging for future years so if you would like to join the Organising Team, please send me an email (mailto:michaela.moody@u3a.org.uk?subject=Joining%20Science%20Network%20Meeting%20Organising%20Team) . In the autumn, we'll arrange some Zoom meetings to brainstorm ideas for future activities. "

** U3A Day - Lets Start Again

It has been agreed that our first national U3A Day - celebrating the learning, activity and fun of U3A - will be relaunched for Wednesday 2 June 2021.

Trustee Sue Stokes said, "We had hoped that we could celebrate U3A Day in 2020 but the continued uncertainty in lockdown as to whether activities could be undertaken led to a re-think.

"It is part of Volunteer Week and an opportunity to celebrate our activities, our contribution to the local community and the innovative ways members have responded to the restrictions under lockdown".

*Any grants received for U3A Day activities should be ringfenced and used for the 2021 event.

** Subject Advice News

** Yoga Continuing In Lockdown

Peter Burton, Subject Advisor for Yoga, has been in touch with many of the Yoga interest groups throughout the country and has been impressed by how many are finding ways to continue.

Peter has written a really interesting article about this which we highly recommend you read. See it here. (<http://sources.u3a.org.uk/>)

Photo credit above: U3A in London Yoga Group 2018

** Mindfulness

U3A Mindfulness Subject Adviser Nancy Taylor has written and recorded a Mindfulness poem which she was inspired to write during this time.

Nancy said, "Poetry is the ideal medium for expressing feelings at this difficult time". You can listen to Nancy's Poem on our U3A YouTube Channel and her series of Mindfulness sessions. Nancy has more on her Subject Advice pages here (<http://https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/subjects/362-mindfulness-and-meditation>) . To see updates from our Subject Advisers please go to the national Subject Advice pages (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/learning/subjects>)

** Research News

Canterbury and District U3A research group's article on Dementia is now a published paper and can be accessed online. (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1471301220933121>)

The paper is entitled - Carers Create: Carer perspectives of a creative programme for people with dementia and their carers on the relationship within the (carer and cared for) dyad.

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Other Research approved by U3A Ethics Working Group

UCL and Imperial College researchers are better trying to understand how individuals use transport and find their way around cities and how this changes with ageing. U3A members who wish to, are being asked to take online survey which includes a navigation task and some follow up questions, and should take up to 30 minutes.

You can take part by following the link: Wayfinding research (https://imperial.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9Y9bTo5xe8RJVxr)
Loughborough University researchers are conducting a survey on changing physical activity and osteoarthritis risk. The survey study is for anyone over the age of 60 and asks about how their physical activity, sedentary behaviour and joint symptoms may have changed from before the coronavirus restrictions.

You can find out more here (https://loughboroughssehs.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6YdfwReixqP04f3)

** In Focus

** Ed Link - Chair Communications and External Affairs Committee

Maybe it is not politic to say this, but I have been enjoying this lockdown. And the reason is quite simple. Time to pursue new interests mostly free from external commitments and pressures.

I have been retired almost 20 years and a U3A member for 15 of those years. In that time I have chaired two different U3As, been a national subject adviser, secretary of U3A in Scotland and Trustee for Scotland and I am still involved in helping to raise the profile of the movement.

I have also started many interest groups. In other words, U3A has been my post retirement career. I am not complaining as it has been a pleasure to help further such a brilliant concept and an outstanding social movement.
I am a person who has enthusiasms almost to the point of obsession.
So, what of lockdown. Well this latest 'obsession' started before lockdown when I bought myself a robotics kit as a Christmas present to myself from the family. I soon discovered that there was, literally, a whole world of interest, information, and potential paths to follow. My interests have led me down the path of the control and programming of mobile robots. Little computers on wheels basically.
As is the case in all learning, the breakthrough moments are hugely satisfying. But then that just raises the next round of questions with the bar set a little higher.
The really big benefit in this enforced lockdown however is partly down to living in rural Kinross-shire, partly down to the run of beautiful weather and mostly down to my wife who has insisted we go out for a daily walk in the hills and around beautiful Loch Leven right on our doorstep. But it will be great to go to out for a meal and give the grandchildren a big hug again.

Download the Bitesize Newsletter (https://mcusercontent.com/656ad5962b370cc9e2731d1ed/files/87c791ca-065c-4a57-8fb2-cd6c7ff5e093/U3A_June_Bitesize_Newsletter.pdf)

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** Website (<http://www.u3a.org.uk>)
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