

CVu3a UPDATE

Edition: Seventy-Three – Jan/Feb 2026

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A very warm welcome to those new members who have joined us since the last newsletter was sent out.

Wishing all Culm Valley u3a members a



Cvu3a have a break from monthly meetings during January

Without sticking my neck out I'm confident we can look forward to another year of interesting and informative talks from our guest speakers as well as some fascinating personal experiences from our own members. If you aren't in the habit of coming to our monthly meetings at Willand Village Hall (2pm on the first Thursday of each month February-December) why not give them a try in 2026 and Learn, Laugh and Live the u3a way. It's a chance to meet other u3a members too.

Gill Sole, Speaker Coordinator

February speaker

Our first talk of 2026 is from members **Sue and Ivan Godfrey** who I discovered are inveterate travellers with a wealth of stories to tell. We're not talking exploring the Mediterranean hotspots or the islands of the Caribbean here but more the intrepid, active type of travel few of us experience. So I'm looking forward to sitting back in the relative comfort of my WVH seat and enjoying vicariously their amazing adventure. This is Sue's introduction to when they went **In Search of Everest:**



'Since Sir Edmund Hillary's famous conquest of the highest peak on Earth in 1953, thousands of people have followed his route to the top at 8849m or, in our case, as far as Everest Base Camp at a height of 5300m. We hope our talk and photos give you a flavour of this magnificent landscape and its culture.'

Speakers for our 2026 Monthly Meetings

I'm really pleased with how this year's list of speakers has come together, though I say it myself. It's a programme which I think encapsulates what our monthly meetings should be - an opportunity to hear from specialist and knowledgeable experts on a variety of engaging topics as well as contributions from some of our members with fascinating tales to tell of their own experiences. I'm really grateful whenever our members agree to take one of the monthly slots - I know how much effort goes into putting their presentations together and for no remuneration - it's done purely for the love of our u3a!

It's this mix of speakers, as well as the opportunity to make new connections, have a cuppa and explore the broad range of Interest Groups we have on offer which I hope will entice you to come along to at least a few of the meetings during the course of the year. You can be assured of a warm welcome and I very much look forward to meeting you there - you'll know me as I'll be at the front with the microphone!

Date	Speaker	Subject
5 th February	Sue & Ivan Godfrey (members)	In Search of Everest
5 th March	Dr Todd Gray MBE	Exeter in Mass Observation, Devon's Home Front Diaries 1937 - 1945
2 nd April	Jackie Hunter	Time Travel Metal Detecting in Devon
7 th May	Marilyn Bishop	Beryl Cook The Artist with the Common Touch!
4 th June	Christine Redhead (member)	Iona, Pilgrimage or Quest
2 nd July	Justin Newland	The Limits of Empire How Drake's Circumnavigation changed history
6 th August	Mick Harrison Cyber Project Officer Devon & Cornwall Police	Cybercrime Awareness
3 rd September AGM	Ken Kelly	Mission to the Moon The American Space Programme

1 st October	Stewart Raine	The Real World of Jane Austen
5 th November	Jim Causley Folk Singer	West Country Folklore and the Traditional Music of Devon
3 rd December	Christmas special	To Be Confirmed

Please Save Your Stamps

Please remember to save your Christmas stamps and bring them along to the next monthly meeting in February 2026. They will be collected and sent off to the Royal National Institute for the Blind. Thank you.

Linda Grantham

Discovery Days Needs Your Help!

Can you help organise Discovery Days?

Will you help plan 6 trips per year?

Please contact either Gill Sole or Paula Longdon if you can contribute.

Thank you

From Okehampton u3a

Once again, Angela and Mike are opening their beautiful gardens for us on **26th March and 12th May**. If you'd like to book for either/both events, please let me know asap as numbers are limited. My email is chair@okehampton-u3a.org

No payment is needed until nearer the time.

Thursday 26th March - Daffodil day from 12.30pm

They'll be offering sandwiches (a gluten free option can be requested in advance), cake and hot drinks at £10pp. A guided tour is included. They expect their wild daffodils, Narsissus pseudonarsissus Lobularis, and Lent Lily of Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud", to be in bloom. In addition to the wild daffodils there are numerous varieties of cultivated daffodils, Narsissi and Tulips. 23 places are left; 17 members having already reserved their places. Please email me asap if you'd like to go.

Tuesday 12th May - Bluebell Day BBQ

The price is £15 per person to include the following:

- A tour of the gardens for those who would like to arrive by 12.30pm.
- BBQ from 2pm with smoked brisket, pork spareribs, burgers, chicken legs, sausages and vegetables expertly prepared and cooked by Mike
- Tea or coffee and cake

All we ask is you bring either a salad or dessert for sharing, and your own alcohol.

24 places are left; 16 members having already reserved their places. Please email me asap if you'd like to go.

Kind regards

Dee McVey, Chair, Okehampton u3a

01837 658590 or okehampton.u3asite.uk

Drive Safer For Longer

Cornwall Mobility are proud to work alongside Devon and Cornwall Police and Vision Zero to roll out 'Drive Safer For Longer' presentations across Cornwall and Devon.

The programme includes:

- a presentation tailored to older drivers free of charge – up to 2 hours
- Includes a free enhancement drive for one member; their feedback is given as part of the presentation
- Useful hints and tips about safer driving techniques
- Information about the impact of health conditions and medications on driving
- Presented by specialist driving instructors
- 5 members get the chance to have a free enhancement drive. Members interested in this will put their name in a "hat" and the first 5 names drawn from the hat get the drive. These drives will be on a different day.

Culm Valley u3a will be holding a Drive Safer For Longer session on Friday 30th January 2026 starting at 2pm in the Club Room of Willand Village Hall.

We still have 6 places available for the presentation, so if you are interested and have not already given me your name, please email me – cvu3agroupscoord@gmail.com.

Thank you

Sue

Upcoming national u3a online events

On a cold wet winters day when you don't want to go too far, why not investigate the national u3a online events.

We've got a jam-packed programme of online learning events this January. Every month, we cover a huge range of topics which are free and available to all.

Highlights this month include:

Exploring world faiths

Monday 12 January at 10am

Understanding online content and misinformation

Tuesday 13 January at 2pm

The world's most enchanting archipelagos: A voyage through the Scottish Hebrides

Wednesday 21 January at 3pm

Why snails might hold answers to age-related memory loss

Tuesday 27 January at 11am

For more information go to <https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events>



News from Interest Groups

Art in Action

We enjoyed Bucks Fizz and mince pies, cream, Stolen cake and more Christmassy treats on our last gathering of 2025.

Everyone finished off an artwork which needed finishing off, giggles ensued!







Creative Writers

Branching out from just one word as a prompt, someone came up with the phrase, **'The first time'**. What were we going to make of that?



Linda recalled the time she made up her mind to learn how to drive. She never does anything by halves and this was no exception. She cut up a copy of the highway code and plastered it all over the kitchen cupboard doors. She made flash cards of every traffic sign and tested herself every day. She recorded the highway code and listened to it as she did the housework. And she persuaded her long-suffering husband to take her out every evening to practise hill starts, 3-point turns, and reversing round corners. After all that, she passed the test first time much

to the relief of her family.

The description written by Chris of her first time attending morning worship on Iona was so detailed we could almost hear the music. She describes how everyone present joins in the unaccompanied singing skilfully led by a musician. No printed music. But all singing in perfect harmony. That must be an awesome experience. I suspect Chris has left a little bit of her heart there on that island.

Hazel had a very special 40th birthday. Not only was it the first time she had ever flown but it was the first time she had been to Australia. She remembered saving up so that she and her family could fly off to Australia to celebrate with her brother. So much to see and all was so different there. She was

showered with gifts, not only on her birthday, but at the street party the following day with all the neighbours. They enjoyed many trips, one driving past emus and kangaroos as well as brightly coloured parrots. And on one occasion, they saw a kookaburra, a member of the kingfisher family. One memorable meal at a fish and chip shop was shark and chips which was, apparently, delicious. Pat was unwell and therefore unable to be with us; and we missed her. We all wished her well on our group WhatsApp, and hope to see her in January at our next meeting.

Paula had written *An Autobiographical Ramble: A Life in Firsts*. Like all of us, the first thing she did was to arrive safely as a newborn. Growing up, making friendships, starting a new job, learning to drive, giving birth, and she has often wondered if life is predetermined. The turning point in her life was her voluntary work in prisons.

'Nothing had prepared me for the complexity of humanity. Within those walls, I encountered those whose life chances were damaged, sometimes by their own choices, often by circumstances that never gave them a fair shot. These experiences taught me humility and compassion. I realised the difficulty of remaining non-judgemental, wrestling with my own hidden biases while seeking to offer genuine support. Equally, I found myself supporting victims of crime, listening, comforting, and learning that healing is rarely straightforward. Volunteering granted me a clearer understanding of how circumstances more than choices shape destinies.'

After listing the things, she will probably never do, Paula ends on a positive note. She might yet parachute from a plane ... and write that book.

Sue kept us guessing until the end of her piece with her first time worming a cat. And then delighted us with her performance of her newly written sketch in the unmistakable style of Joyce Grenfell. She was coaxing her class of little darlings in the nursery school towards their Nativity Drama with the usual pleas of '... don't do that' and the confiscation of pencils which might just get stuck in an ear. I hope, very much, she can be persuaded to share this piece with a wider audience. It needs to be heard.

SHARED STORY

The story so far: A newly retired widower has just moved from London to a cottage in the Kent countryside. He hopes to enjoy fishing and perhaps join the Ramblers Association. The house nearby has sprouted a FOR SALE sign but as it is set apart, he doesn't anticipate any problems with neighbours.

It was Sue's turn to continue our shared story, and this is what she did.

NEW NEIGHBOURS

Eventually a SOLD sign appeared and I heard from the pub locals that my new neighbours were arriving the following Friday.

A week later I positioned myself at our shared hedge with a pair of shears. Just as the removal van arrived, I had to make a dash for the lavatory. Bloody prostate! Eventually, I raced outdoors but the van had gone and the only sign of my new neighbours was that all the curtains had been drawn. I sat on the bench in the garden a little ashamed of myself. I'd spent hours acting like a man with nothing better to do with his life. In London I would never have been curious about those about me, just hoped they were 'the right sort'. I wasn't prejudiced. I would simply prefer the wrong sort to live elsewhere.

In the following weeks I began to notice my wife's hoard had begun to smell. I could not pinpoint the exact box it was coming from and supposed something like a rat had got in one of the boxes and died. The boxes filled the dining room from floor to ceiling so there was no easy access to anything. I supposed the smell would disappear at some point.

One night I was having one of my many pee breaks when I thought I heard a noise downstairs. I had to go back to my bedroom to put my hearing aids in, then I crept to the upstairs hall. Peering over the banister I could make out a blueish fluorescent glow and the sound of something heavy being moved. I had just put my foot on the top step when

Chris will continue this for next month.
Happy New Year - LJRM - the Scribe

Quizzers

Our last quiz of 2025 saw Linda and Judy entertaining us with rounds which included Christmas anagrams, Christmas pics, Christmas trivia and some General Knowledge. Did you know, for example, that the country with the most islands is Sweden?

At the first quiz of 2026 on 9 January Linda and Liz challenged the group with rounds including Food and Drink, Words and language, In the Wild, and Famous events which took place in January. If you knew that the most frequent word in the Bible was Lord, or that the country which gained independence in 1804 was Haiti, then you were doing well.

We set all our own questions and will enjoy a total of 18 quizzes in 2026. Our next session is on Friday 23 January.

Walkers

Our first walk of 2026 on 15 January is a relatively short one at 3 3/4 miles to get us back into our stride after the Christmas break. From Holcombe Rogus to the northernmost section of the Grand Western Canal between Fenacre Bridge and Waytown Tunnel then back to Holcombe, this is a fairly flat and unchallenging walk which is full of beautiful countryside. Lunch afterwards at The Globe Sampford Peverell.

The Walkers Group meets every third Thursday - for more details contact gill.sole@yahoo.com.

Our final Behind the Scenes outing

(this group has been replaced by the new Discovery Days led by Paula Longden) is another visit to the **Exeter Energy Recovery Facility** on Marsh Barton on Tuesday 17 February from 10am – 12.30pm. There is no charge for the visit but everyone will need to make their own way there or contact me to try and arrange a lift. There is car parking available on site but we are encouraged to car share where possible.

There are 4 spare places available - the visit is limited to 20. If you are interested email gill.sole@yahoo.com

The facility is run by Viridor and operates under a partnership with Devon County Council to divert non-recyclable waste away from landfill. It handles c60,000 tonnes of waste p.a. from households within Exeter and the surrounding area each year, converting the waste to electricity to power the equivalent of 6,624 homes.

The visit will include the following:-

- Tea and coffee on arrival
- Presentation on waste management in Devon and the Energy from Waste process
- Question and answer session
- Tour of the facility to see the control room and viewing platform

Interest Groups information

Group	Contact <small>Please click on name to email</small>	Venue, Day & Time
Art in Action	Rachel Kingdom	2 nd & 4 th Monday each month 13.30 – 16.30 Club Room, Willand Village Hall
Beginners Spanish	Josy Tidmarsh	Weekly at The Bakehouse, Cullompton
Beginners Jewellery	Julie Murphy	Contact Julie
Boules/Pétanque	Richard Taylor Mobile: 07816337456	Every Friday 11:00 and 14:00 Weather dependent
Bridge	Maggie Lambert	2 nd , 3 rd & 4 th Thurs of the month 14.00- 16.00, Club room, WVH
Colour Pencils	Sue Hooper-Lawrie	1 st & 3 rd Monday each month 13.30 – 16.30 Club Room, Willand Village Hall
Craft	Linda Arnold	1 st & 3 rd Wednesday each month 9:30 to 12:30 Committee Room, Willand Village Hall
Creative Writing	Hazel Newman	3 rd Tuesday each month 14.00
Dog Walkers	John Hayston	Contact John for more information
French Conversation	Sally Graham	1 st Monday each month at 11:00
French Conversation #2	Julie Murphy	2 nd and 4 th Tuesdays each month
Games	Jean Turner	1 st Monday each month 10:30 to 12:30 Club Room, Willand Village Hall
Genealogy	Walter Longden	2 nd Wednesday each month 10:30 to 12:30 Hayridge Centre
History	Alison Waple	3 rd Thursday each month plus various other days

Group	Contact Please click on name to email	Venue, Day & Time
Jazz Appreciation	Richard Taylor 07816337456	Contact Richard
Mahjong	Jean Turner	2 nd Monday each month 10:30 to 12:30 Club Room, Willand Village Hall
Mixed Media Art	Annie Forster	Kentisbeare Village Hall 2 nd and 4 th Wednesday each month. 9:30 to 12:30
Music	Trisha Luxton	Willand Village Hall, Annex
Photography	Sue Childs 07398 686612	Last Monday each month
Quilting	Linda Arnold	1 st & 3 rd Tuesday each month 9.30 to 12.30 - Committee Room, Willand Village Hall.
Quizzing	Martin Newman	1 st and 3 rd Friday each month at 11:00 - Willand Village Hall
Reading	Sally Graham	3 rd Thursday each month, 14:30 upstairs at Cullompton Library
Sewists	Yvonne Doherty	Contact Yvonne for more information
Soloists (But not alone)	Jenny Day 01884 840786/ 07770 985840	Contact Jenny
Strollers 1 & 2	Elieen Turner & Jackie Sim	2 nd Tuesday each month @10:30 4 th Tuesday each month @10:00
Walkers (4-6 Miles)	Gill Sole	3 rd Thursday each month a/m
Wine Appreciation	John Hayston	Please contact John for more information.

If you have an idea for an Interest Group, please get in touch with
Groups Co-ordinator on email: cvu3agroupscoord@gmail.com

Contact Emails for current Executive Committee members:

Email	Current role holder
cvu3achair1@gmail.com	John Hayston
cvu3afinance@gmail.com	Judy Morris
cvu3abussec@gmail.com	Paula Rees
cvu3agroupscoord@gmail.com	Sue Hooper-Lawrie
cvu3amemsecretary@gmail.com	Alison Waple
cvu3abeacon@gmail.com	Marian Luck

Monthly Meetings:

Monthly Meetings are held on the FIRST THURSDAY of each month, except January. The meeting starts at 2pm, with members arriving any time after 1.15pm. We hold our meetings at Willand Village Hall, Gables Road, Willand, EX15 2PL. Check monthly newsletter for more information about arrangements for upcoming meeting/s.

Suggested Venues for Group Meetings

John Tallack Youth & Community centre, Meadow Lane, Cullompton. Ex15 1LL.

Email: info@jtc.org.uk Website: www.johntallackcentre.org.uk

The Walronds, 6 Fore Street, Cullompton.

Email: Info@walronds.com Website: www.walronds.com

The Bakehouse, 3 High Street, Cullompton.

Email: enquiries@thebakehousecullompton.co.uk Website:

www.thebakehousecullompton.co.uk

Phone: 01884 35222

The Steamer, Five Bridges, Cullompton.

Email: hello@the-steamer.co.uk Phone: 01884 904960

Willand Village Hall, Gables Road, Willand. Bookings contact: Frances Wilcox.

Email: bookings@willandvillagehall.org.uk

Willand Health & Community Centre, (opposite Village Hall) Bookings contact; F. Wilcox

Email: info@whacc.org.uk

Cullompton Library, (part of The Hayridge Centre). Contact; Rachel Kidd.

Email: Cullompton.library@librariessunlimited.org.uk. Phone; 01884 824555

Go to <https://www.devonlibraries.org.uk/web/arena> to pre book a computer time slot by using the iCAM booking system or directly. [https://lu.imil.uk/Account/LogOn?](https://lu.imil.uk/Account/LogOn?ReturnUrl=%2fbookings)

[ReturnUrl=%2fbookings](https://lu.imil.uk/Account/LogOn?ReturnUrl=%2fbookings)

Opening hours (Staffed): Monday-Friday – 09:00 – 17:00 Saturday – 09:00 – 13:00

Square Corner, The Square, Uffculme, Ex15 3AA: <https://www.squarecorner.org.uk/book-online>

Bridwell, Uffculme, are happy for large groups to meet there. If you are planning to hold a meeting in the Orangery for 8 or more people, please email cafe@bridwell.co.uk to book the group in and let them know numbers and if you are planning to eat or not.

Kentisbeare Village Hall, EX15 2AA Contact Melanie on email – villagehall@kentisbeare.net the Booking Secretary.

If you know of any other suitable venues, please let us know.

**Deadline for items for UPDATE is always the 10th of the month.
Please send to johnhayston1@gmail.com**