

Groups Coordinator Report from April to September 2025

Since I was asked, 5 months ago, to be your Groups Coordinator I have been able to visit all of our current Interest Groups – bar one – Short Tennis! My thanks go to Jeanette for all her previous hard work when she held this role. All her efforts meant it took me a while to get around all our Groups.

This past year has seen our u3a continue to flourish as a local group for mutual learning, community engagement, and friendship. The enthusiasm and participation of our members has been inspiring, and I am delighted to share the progress, highlights, and future news of our Interest Groups.

Our u3a now boasts 22 active Interest Groups, reflecting an impressive range of hobbies and subjects—spanning languages, the arts, walking, sports, and beyond. These are held in venues around Shepton Mallet. Each group is coordinated by a dedicated leader. Sometimes the other members share the leader's role enabling everyone to have ownership of the Group. The diversity and depth of our Interest Group programme demonstrates our commitment to providing opportunities for everyone.

In the Spring, responding to member feedback, a new group was launched, 'It's all in the Genes' for family history help and research. This new addition attracted a good amount of interest and participation. Our many other groups including, to name just a few—Book Club, Walking, Photography and Table Tennis—remain as popular as ever, consistently drawing lively and engaged audiences.

This year, we experienced an increase in membership, with many newcomers joining specifically to take part in our Interest Group activities. Our Collett Park day, the high standard of Speaker Meetings and the u3a's 'try a group first' taster sessions have proved invaluable in welcoming potential members and introducing them to the breadth of our Interest Groups available.

In the coming year, the aim is to further enrich our Interest group offerings with new topics. Along similar lines to our Skittles lunches, a new monthly Games Group will be trialling in September with an email invitation sent out to all members. Meeting once a month but also giving our members a way to meet up and play board games, in each other's homes, by arrangement.

A new monthly Quiz group for all levels of quizzers and a Chair Yoga group especially devised for our members, also begin in September. A short Craft course has just started enabling more of our members to enjoy this interest too.

If you have an interest, be it a hobby or a pastime that you would be happy to share, then please do contact me. It could be a day's workshop or a short course not necessarily a weekly meeting.

I want to thank all Group leaders for their dedication, creativity, and time. Their enthusiasm and hard work are the foundation of our vibrant group life. Sincere thanks also go to our Chair Janet, all the Committee, Jim our Newsletter co-editor and Keith our Webmaster for steadfast support, (even when I make mistakes) and to every member for making our u3a such a kind, welcoming and lively place to Learn Live and Laugh.

Barbie Bradbury SMu3a Groups Coordinator.