

WITNEY u3a

NEW MEMBERS' BRIEFING PACK

WELCOME TO WITNEY U3A



Contact: office.witneyu3a@gmail.com

Letter from the Chair

Dear New Member,

Thank you for choosing to become a member of Witney u3a. On behalf of the Committee and myself, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you and hope you will find your membership of our u3a a rewarding source of learning, laughter, companionship and fun.

Included in this pack are:

- Suggestions on how to get the most from your membership;
- A brief introduction to Witney u3a;
- A copy of our Members' Code of Conduct;
- The Ethos of the u3a Movement

Here in Witney there is plenty for our members to do. We currently have 60+ interest groups, with new groups forming all the time as members' interests develop and evolve. Unlike many u3as, we hold two speaker meetings most months of the year on an extraordinarily varied range of topics. Outings are also a regular monthly feature, with visits to interesting places, cinema trips and this year even a short cruise!

Our website is developing and expanding, and we hope it will become your go-to resource for information about your u3a. Please do access it and browse through it so that you become familiar with where to find the information you need. If you have any unanswered questions, you can also access our virtual office by email at **office.witneyu3a@gmail.com**.

If it hasn't happened already, you will shortly be invited to a New Members' Meeting, where you will hear more about Witney u3a, our meetings, our groups and how to get involved. We hope you will come along and very much look forward to meeting you there.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Susie', written on a light blue background.

Susie Wood, Chair.

Getting the best out of your u3a Membership

Witney u3a is a vibrant, thriving community of 800+ members and the opportunities available to you as a member are wide and varied. Most members will tell you that the more you get involved and the more you get to know us, the greater the enjoyment and satisfaction you will experience. So please take the time to familiarise yourself and find what interests you and where you feel you fit.

Our current members say that for them the benefits include:

- Making new friends with similar interests to you;
- Attending monthly meetings and hearing interesting speakers;
- Learning new skills and expanding existing ones;
- Joining a variety of groups and developing new interests;
- Starting new groups and sharing the skills and knowledge they already have;
- Participating in outings and cinema trips with other friendly people;
- Easy access to the website for up-to-date information;
- Regular email updates.

Things you need to know

Speaker Meetings

Speaker Meetings are held in the Methodist Church, Witney at 2.00 pm on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month, apart from January and December when there is only one. Information about upcoming speakers is regularly updated on the website. The Church coffee bar, staffed by u3a volunteers, is open from 1.30 to 3.30 so that you can sit and have a cup of tea or coffee with friends and meet new people. Members of the committee are also available in the Lower Hall if you want to find out more about membership, outings or groups and as an added bonus, there is a book stall where you can buy and donate books.

Interest Groups

Interest Groups are at the very centre of every u3a and are a great way to develop your interests and make new friends. With over 60 existing groups the possibilities are endless and we are always keen to find out about what knowledge and experience you might bring to our u3a so that we can add to them.

At the New Members' meeting our Groups Coordinator will introduce you to which groups are currently available for you to apply to join. We ask you to be aware that some groups may be full and it may be necessary to join a waiting list. We particularly ask you not just to turn up to a group meeting without prior approval or invitation. We try to keep the information about our groups updated on our website, but if you would like more details about a group you are interested in, please ask the Groups Coordinator either by sending her an email or speaking to her at a speaker meeting.

The Virtual Office

The back-up to all this is our 'virtual office', which you can access any time by email at **office.witneyu3a@gmail.com**. Please bear in mind that the person in charge of the office is a volunteer and doesn't work 24 hours a day 7 days a week, so you may have to be a little patient in waiting for a response.

Organisation

Founded in 1985 Witney u3a has steadily grown over the years. It is an independent membership organisation operating under the umbrella of the national u3a and is registered with the Charity Commission: **Charity Number 294071, Unincorporated Members Organisation**. It is managed by an organising committee which meets on the first Tuesday of every month. Its constitution, policies and minutes of previous meetings are available on the website. Members are welcome to come along to any committee meeting as an observer and we are always pleased to receive questions or requests for information about what we do.

Looking to the Future

Building on its success, over the next 3 years Witney u3a aims to future proof our organisation by:

- Seeking to bring greater vibrancy and variety to our activities;
- Broadening our appeal to a younger membership, without neglecting our longstanding members;
- Engaging more fully with our local community so that fewer people are heard to say 'what is u3a?';
- Maintaining our involvement with other local u3as and the wider u3a network and where possible sharing knowledge, information and resources to the mutual benefit of us all;
- Ensuring our new developments are guided by our members through regular consultation and ongoing communication.

We will need the help and involvement of ALL our members to achieve these ambitious goals, so please, make yourself known and share your skills and experience with us.

Witney u3a - MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

Purpose

The Member Code of Conduct sets out the standard of behaviour expected from all our Witney u3a members.

Member Code of Conduct

- Members are expected to know, follow and promote the Principles of the u3a Movement at every opportunity.
- Members must always act in the best interests of Witney u3a and the u3a Movement, strive to uphold its reputation and never do anything which could bring their own, another u3a or the u3a Movement into disrepute or expose it to undue risk.
- Members are expected to use Witney u3a's resources responsibly and only to further its stated charitable objects/purposes.
- Members are expected to reflect the current organisational policies of Witney u3a, regardless of whether it conflicts with their personal views.
- Members are expected to abide by Witney u3a's procedures and practices.
- Members are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect at all times.

The Principles of the u3a Movement

The u3a movement is non-religious and non-political and has three main types of principle:

Lifelong Learning • Membership of a u3a is open to all people who have retired from full time work

- Members promote the values of lifelong learning and the positive attributes of belonging to a u3a.

Self Help

- Members form interest groups covering as wide a range of topics and activities as they desire; by the members, for the members.

- No qualifications are sought or offered. Learning is for its own sake, with enjoyment being the prime motive, not qualifications or awards.

- There is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all u3a members.

The Mutual Aid Principle

- Each u3a is a mutual aid organisation, operationally independent but a member of The Third Age Trust, which requires adherence to the guiding principles of the u3a movement.

- No payments are made to members for services rendered to any u3a.

- Each u3a is self-funded with membership.