

Newsletter

January 2026



2025 Activities



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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the January 2026 edition of the High Lane u3a newsletter. I hope your Christmas went to plan and would like to wish a Happy New Year to all our members. As ever, my thanks to all the contributors for their interesting and informative contributions. The cover photo this month highlights some of our group activities from this year. We hope you enjoyed these.



In this edition, the Chair's message on the next page reminds us that offers of help to run our u3a are very welcome. The ethos of u3a is that we are a self-group group where members play an active part in running their local u3a and the activities so please don't hesitate to get involved. The u3a can't prosper without you.

One of our members, Barry Taylor, has suggested a beginner's French language and conversation group. If you might be interested in this, please email me at my newsletter editor address and I will pass your details to Barry.

Also, you will find a report of the recent Christmas party, reports from groups including our annual Quiz of the Year where you can delve into your memories and look back at the events of 2025, plus information from National and Regional u3a. This edition of the newsletter is accompanied by the National Office bitesize Friends newsletter for December and the winter newsletter from NorthWest u3a.

Please remember this is your newsletter and I'm always happy to hear from our members. We are pleased to welcome some new members this month. We look forward to meeting you at our meetings and interest groups and your contributions to the newsletter will be very welcome. Please feel free to share some of your news, your interests, or items you have found that you think would be of interest to other members.

The next issue of the newsletter will be February 2026 so please send your contributions to me by 30th January 2026 at newslettereditor@highlaneu3a.org.uk

Diane Saxon



Seasonal photos courtesy of the Photography group

FROM THE CHAIR

A Happy New Year to everyone.

I hope everyone had a good Christmas and let's hope we all have a good New Year.



The annual Christmas party was very well supported and in fact it was a sell-out. Thanks to all who came. The entertainment was provided by Joy and Kevin Siddall and the food by Reflections. A big thank you to all who helped set up the hall and an even bigger thank you to all of you who helped put away the tables and chairs. Also, everyone who helped with the washing up at the end of the afternoon. It was done in no time at all. Thanks again.

If any of you would be interested in joining the committee or interested in helping it would be nice to have various positions covered for the future. We are all getting older and sooner or later positions will need to be covered for when committee members decide to stand down or fall down. Please think about this.

Quite a few of the groups would also appreciate a little help. Again, it helps to keep the groups running. It's not hard and there is always plenty of help on offer. As always, any suggestions for new groups would be good.

Your committee is already planning events for this year, 2026, and any ideas would be most welcome. eg. Evening/Afternoon entertainment, days out, holidays. We are looking at having the two magistrates back and having a mock trial.

Last but not least we could do with some help at the monthly meetings putting the chairs out before the meeting. If you can help, please let one of the committee members know.

Please remember that your subscription is due for renewal in January.

Thanks again and I wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year.

Paul (Chair)

CHRISTMAS PARTY 2025

The Christmas party took place on Wednesday 10th December and it was a great success. It was very well attended as everyone had bought their tickets well in advance. We were entertained by Kevin and Joy Siddall. Unsurprisingly the theme was Christmas, and their repertoire included very popular songs and some less well known but equally enjoyable.

They are very professional with fabulous voices and some very funny jokes. They were ably accompanied by the audience on sleigh bells!



After the entertainment the food was served, and everyone seemed to enjoy it. The free raffle was very popular and there were lots of lovely prizes.

The next monthly meeting is on 14th January 2026 when Colin Mail will be speaking on Lyme: Science and superstition, Leeches and Leghs.

Kath Wareham

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please would group leaders prepare a report on last year's activities for the AGM. If you cannot attend, please ask someone in your group to read the report or send a copy to Lynn Arnold.

Please would you also check your group's webpage on the website to make sure that the information is up to date and correct. You might want to place all or part of your AGM report on the group's page for the benefit of prospective members. Please send your changes to the webmaster, Jeff Mortimer at webmaster@highlaneu3a.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Membership is now due for renewal. Renewals will be accepted at the January meeting and at the February AGM. Our membership fee remains low in comparison with other u3as. This year you will only need to complete a renewal form if there are any changes to your contact details.

As stated in the Treasurer's message in the previous newsletter, the membership fee for 2026 is £8, or £12 if you also wish to order the u3a Matters Magazine. Your extra £4 is also good value – this gets you the next five issues of the magazine posted to your door, containing many items of interest to u3a members.



AGM

The AGM will take place in February. We welcome nominations for members wishing to serve on the Committee. A nomination form is on the last page of the newsletter, or one can be obtained from the Secretary, Lynn Arnold. Offers of help are always very welcome.

If you know of any member who would be interested in helping to run our u3a please suggest they get in touch with a committee member who can tell them more about what is involved. If you wish to be nominated, please complete the form, get it signed, and return it to the Secretary, Lynn Arnold, by the January meeting.

u3a Still Got It Photography Project

This is a project being organised by National u3a. The project is all about capturing the spirit, energy, and creativity of u3a members. We're not looking for technical perfection – just images that tell a story or highlight the many ways older people are embracing learning and new adventures later in life.

A selection of submitted photos will be featured in our online gallery on this page, and with permission from the photographer and subjects, may also be used in u3a promotional materials to share with others.

This is your chance to showcase the amazing activities happening in your u3a and highlight the positive approach older people are taking to their learning and activities later in life.

You can see some examples and get more details here [u3a – The Still Got It Photography Project](#) plus guidelines for submitting your photo.

GROUP NEWS

ART

Well, the Art group only had three sessions in December, so we decided to make the most of them! We started with another visit from Jeremy Ford for a pastel workshop, we had an extended session of almost five hours for this. It was really interesting and we all learned a new technique, including Sheila who has been doing pastels a long time! There were only 15 of us present due to other pre-Christmas activities, but it meant we got plenty of individual attention from Jeremy which was great!



Our final session was our Christmas party which 25 attended, great fun with a quiz won by the usual suspects, will need a handicap next year, I think! Spot the difference in the photos!



Madeleine Hennessy

BALLROOM DANCING

Ballroom Dancing rounded off an excellent year with a lovely Christmas Dance and Buffet, with appropriate music and guidance provided by Kate and Ian, and a splendid array of food. It was good to see Sam, Irene and Veronica dancing with us again, plus Walter showing good progress after his hip fracture.



We will restart on 16th January, with Walter due to provide the music.

Walter Mason

BRIDGE

Thursday bridge

The Thursday Bridge group has grown quite a lot this year. We now have eight tables at times. We play Duplicate bridge one week and Chicago the next.

We have enjoyed two Bridge parties at local golf clubs this year and had an enjoyable Christmas party. Anyone interested in joining please get in touch with me. New members are very welcome.



Linda Dale

Monday bridge

In recent months, we've had seven tables, but this dropped off a bit towards Christmas. Our last session was our Christmas party where we played Chicago bridge instead of our normal Duplicate pairs, accompanied by a glass of wine, Christmas cake and chocolates. Prizes were awarded for highest positive, lowest negative and closest to zero with spot prizes for each round. Congratulations to the winners.

Normal sessions start again on Monday, 5th January. We look forward to welcoming returning members and to new members who would like to join us.

CHURCHES AND PUBS

Another successful year for Churches and Pubs. If we manage another four visits next year, we will have visited 100, YES ONE HUNDRED different churches. Pubs we will have visited, about ninety-five, as we have been to a few twice. I think you can count on one hand the poor meals we have had.

Thanks again to everyone who organised a visit last year and we are looking forward to 2026.

Thanks to all of you for making this a very successful group over the years.
PS. Weather wise it is nearly always fine.

Paul Kenneth

CRIME FICTION READING

This year we have read 12 books of various vintages and have been pleased to have a good variety of styles and approaches. It is rare that we all like the same book and for some books there have been quite wide variations in our views – which, of course, is great. We have discovered some authors who were new to most of us and revisited some doyens of the genre.

Our top scorer this year was *The Janus Stone* by Elly Griffiths published in 2016, the second of 15 in the Ruth Galloway series. A close second was *Skinner's Rules* by Quintin Jardine from 1994, the first book in the long running Bob Skinner series.

Our book for December was 'The Long Shadow' by Celia Fremlin, an author none of us had read before. The response was mostly negative as we felt that although the story got off to a good start and had a satisfying ending, the middle section became rather boring and nearly all the characters unpleasant.

The story starts with the recently widowed Imogen attending a friend's party, where she is introduced to a young man, Teri a student. Escaping from the party she returns home when at 3am she is wakened by the phone ringing. It is Teri attempting to blackmail her with threats of telling the police he knows she killed Ivor, her husband. She hangs up saying it's not true but, strangely, after the police had notified her early one morning that Ivor had been killed in a road accident she never mentioned it to anyone until the following day so throughout the story we are left wondering what she was doing during that first day?

Christmas arrives bringing with it a host of uninvited and unwanted guests:- the son and daughter from Ivor's first marriage, the daughter's husband and two little boys, followed by Ivor's second ex-wife and finally a strange girl student is foisted on her as a possible lodger. During the celebrations several uncanny and rather spooky happenings occur. The guests linger over New Year and beyond, then the boys suddenly become upset remembering their old cat left at home. Without mentioning it to the others Imogen decides to collect it for them but arriving at the house various things seem odd and another strange 'happening' occurs. On the way home the blackmailing Teri appears as she waits at the station. After their initial delight in seeing the cat, the boys soon lose interest until it disappears, so Imogen takes them to search for it but with no luck. At bedtime the boys sneak out into the freezing cold to continue the search, they too disappear so Imogen goes out to find them and in doing so meets a much older woman looking for her two grandsons. From then on, all the mysteries are solved bringing the story to a neat conclusion. The boys are found nearby, the unwelcome, demanding visitors return to their own homes, Teri and the girl disappear, and Imogen is left alone, at last, having come to terms with the loss of Ivor who she now sees as a pompous, self-regarding man, a sentiment with which we all agreed.

Our next meeting is on Friday, January 16th when we shall discuss 'Opening Night' by Ngaio Marsh. Do come along if you would like to join us and maybe introduce us to more 'new to us' authors, we haven't read them all yet !!

Nancy Colclough

CURRENT AFFAIRS

We discussed David Dimbleby's TV series 'What's the Monarchy For?' which several of the group had watched. The monarch has soft power and diplomacy through state visits, royal tours and the Commonwealth (remember the PM giving Trump an invitation from the King to visit the UK) These generate income from tourists. Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and Holyrood are all state owned. King Charles is the first billionaire monarch. He pays income tax but not inheritance tax. His income comes from the Sovereign Grant (paid by the State) and the Duchy of Lancaster for which he charges rent for NHS properties, some state schools, prisons, and docking at the port of Liverpool etc. We thought that the size of the monarchy should continue to be reduced and that Prince William would probably do so. The opinion of the group was that it was better to have a monarch under control with little real power than a dictator such as Putin or a president such as Trump.

Why does Donald Trump have such an obsession with the Lord Mayor of London Sadiq Khan? He says he is a nasty person who has done a terrible job. He is horrible, vicious and disgusting. Khan was not afraid to reply, has been elected three times and leads a liberal, multicultural and successful city with record numbers of Americans visiting. Everyone deplored the statesmanlike language Trump uses.

From a newspaper survey on things that make Christmas special, 69% said people, nostalgia and family traditions, 61% cooking and eating dinner, 56% opening presents together, 33% catching up with loved ones, 31% watching TV or films, 19% family games, 15% first cup of tea or coffee in the morning, 14% evening snacks or left overs, 3% post dinner nap. In our group, two said people, nostalgia and family traditions, one cooking and eating dinner, one opening presents together, two watching TV or films, one post dinner nap.

Should the UK introduce voluntary national service similar to Germany and France? There have been some objections from the youth in Germany. Most of the group thought this was a good idea and it might ease unemployment for a while.

Several countries have opted out of the Eurovision Song Contest next year including Spain, Netherlands, Slovenia, Iceland and Ireland. We all said we were not interested and did not watch it anyway.

Should FIFA have awarded a Peace Trophy and medal to Donald Trump at the draw for the World Cup? Canada and Mexico are also hosting. Will their presidents get trophies and medals?

A Scottish nurse won her case against the NHS about transgender changing rooms. The Supreme Court ruled that sex is biological under Equality Law. Another case is proceeding in Darlington. Transgender women and girls will no longer be offered membership of the WI or Girl Guides or be allowed to participate in female sport. Some members pointed out that the number of unisex toilets in public places is increasing.

We discussed the proposed reduction in Jury trials and that less serious crimes likely to be awarded a sentence of less than three years be referred to Magistrates Courts. The group did not feel that they had enough knowledge to pass an opinion. After all trial by Jury has been part of British law for centuries.

Margaret McDermott

MEMOIRS

We had an informal meeting as it was our Christmas party. There were stories of how we celebrated Christmas during childhood and different New Year traditions, and an interesting tale about a flight from Lille in France to Luton. There was much laughter, and party food.

Nostalgia is a layered emotion that surfaces when we look back on meaningful memories, usually from childhood or early adulthood, when life felt simpler. It can spark warm, uplifting, and sometimes bittersweet feelings, often tied to relationships, key life moments, or experiences that shape our sense of self and where we feel we belong. When we experience nostalgia, we create feelings of comfort, continuity, and emotional safety.

It's not just remembering a fact – it's re-experiencing a moment that feels important to who we are. That's why a smell, a song, or an old photo can suddenly act like a 'time machine' and bring back a memory with strong emotion attached to it. Written memories can then become memoirs.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, 6th January at 2.0pm in the small hall.

Quote for the month

Your life does not get better by chance; it gets better by change. Take that first step with confidence and remember that every day is an opportunity to create a brighter tomorrow. — Jim Rohn

Happy new year to everyone

Barbara Kenneth

HISTORY

The history group enjoyed a diverse selection of presentations this year. Topics covered included ancient Egyptian tomb inscriptions, the Irish patriot Roger Casement, the English Civil War, the development of commercial recording and cinema noir.

The group meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month and new members are welcome. The first meeting of 2026 is 28th January when Marlene will be talking about Clement Atlee.

Barry Taylor

PHOTOGRAPHY

Here are the results for the December Christmas competition.

Joint first: Hazel Grove Nativity Diane. Tree of Lights at Manchester Cathedral ... Ken. 6 points each.

Joint second: Manchester Town Hall Christmas...Walter. Fork Handles taken in a High Lane garden Veronica. 5 points each

Joint third: Knitted Nativity... Barbara. Where is Rudolph ... Mark. Christmas Mannequin. Veronica. 4 points each.

Not all of the winning entries are free of copyright so here is a selection.



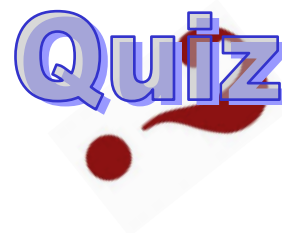
January's topic is 'WINTER LANDSCAPE'. New members are welcome. Entries by the SECOND THURSDAY in January please.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Healthy New Year.

Ken Jackson

QUIZZING

During 2025, the quiz group has met ten times, run a quiz evening, and come up with over 1,000 questions in more than 30 different styles and categories. Pretty good for what is a small group!



2025 Quiz of the Year

How well do you remember 2025?
Answers are on the last page of the newsletter.

January	Which UK city was inaugurated as City of Culture 2026?
February	Which Soviet Chess Grandmaster and 10th World Chess Champion died this month?
March	Who was elected as the 24 th Prime Minister of Canada?
April	Pope Leo XIV was elected. What is his nationality?
May	Austria won the Eurovision Song Contest with Wasted love by JJ. Where was the venue for the finals?
June	One lucky person survived a major air crash this month. Which airline owned the plane?
July	Who did England beat to win the UEFA Women's European Cup?
August	And what did England women win this month?
September	Angela Rayner was forced to resign over a housing issue. Where is her parliamentary constituency?
October	Who was elected as the first female Archbishop of Canterbury?
November	Where did a fire in an apartment complex kill over 150 people?
December	What was in the case defaced by protesters throwing apple crumble and custard?

Fancy challenging yourself with us? New quizzers are very welcome. More members would be useful to help us build our teams. We meet on the fourth Thursday of the month. Meetings always have a relaxed and sociable environment. You can be assured of a friendly welcome.

Please contact me if you would like to join this group or would like more information.

Diane Saxon

TRAVEL



January 26 th	Potters resort Essex Information at January meeting
May 3 rd	High Clere Castle (Downton Abbey)
June 20 th	Cumbria and Lake District 4 nights at Damson Dene Hotel Bowness BALANCE at MARCH meeting
July 17 th	CRUISE FROM LIVERPOOL 8 nights Ireland and Scotland Fred Olsen, Bolette. Cabins still available

Margaret McDermott

WALKING

**Walking Group and Short Walks Group combined Christmas Walk.
Bollington – Kerridge – Endon Hall – Moat Hall Farm – Dawson Farm – Sowcar**

This joint seasonal event, like last year, was planned to suit both walking groups, finishing with our Christmas meal. Alas, what could go wrong – did go wrong!

Initially, our 18 strong group started on a route over ancient, paved millworker pathways which provided an insight into the industrial heritage of the area – now reclaimed by nature. Unfortunately, the distant spectacular views were limited by the wet conditions.



The hitherto dry bright period of good weather changed to very wet challenging conditions. Even the profile of White Nancy was almost lost against angry skies. However, the poor conditions did not deter our stoic group, clad in waterproof kit, much cheer and happy chatter accompanied our progress.

Our route happened upon another large walking group, moving at a slower pace along a narrow path, they were in good spirits too, surprising us by forming two lines of people holding sticks aloft – guard of honour style – whilst we passed through the human tunnel, they sang Christmas carols!

As our walk progressed, windy wet conditions strengthened, we had a short coffee stop, stood in the lee of a tall wall. We then proceeded to take a shortened route back to our starting point, The Poachers Inn, Bollington. Now, after weeks of planning and several visits, we expected The Poaches Inn to be ready to provide a hearty welcome and seasonal meals according to our preordered list.



We were surprised to be greeted by the 'singing group' we had met earlier; they were occupying the area nearest the fire! Once installed on the remaining random tables and meeting up with several other group members' that had come for the meal, the buzz of enthusiastic chatter filled the crowded atmosphere.

Time passed quickly within the excitement of the season, but no food appeared from the kitchen, even the other group had had little or no service. The staff were incapable of giving a plausible explanation or say when food would be served. The meal had been booked for 1.00 pm. At around 3.00 pm the penny dropped – we abandoned any hope of being fed and left for home.

A day to remember for all the wrong reasons. Only recommend The Poachers Inn at Bollington to Slimmer's World members!

However, many thanks to Ruth for her comprehensive liaison efforts with the unprofessional pub and Merlyn for his assistance with route planning.

Happy New Year everyone

David Burke

National Office Learning Events for the New Year

Some highlights you might want to book. Remember they can fill up quickly.

- 7 Jan How do your medicines work? – An Introduction
- 9 Jan Mindfulness and Compassion meets Poetry
- 13 Jan Understanding Online Content and Misinformation
- 14 Jan How to build confidence in later life
- 15 Jan When numbers turn nasty...
- 23 Jan The Calendar, Time and the Cosmos part 1 (part 2 is on 30 January)
- 26 Jan Wellbeing Taster Morning with u3a Subject Advisers

There are many other events. All are free via Zoom. Click here for details and to book a place. <https://www.u3a.org.uk/events/educational-events>

SNIPPETS

Maths challenge

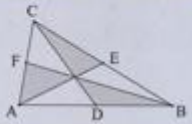
Problems and puzzles are posed weekly online by David Browning, Rod Marshall, Ian Stewart, Anne Stothers and u3a Maths & Stats Subject Adviser David Martin, and can be found at [u3a.org.uk/maths](https://www.u3a.org.uk/maths)

QUESTION 1

Angela is two years older than Brenda who is four years older than Claire. Angela is twice as old as Claire. How old are Angela, Brenda and Claire?

QUESTION 2

D, E and F are the midpoints of the sides of the triangle ABC. Show that exactly half of triangle ABC has been shaded.



puzzle solutions on page 89

Taken from u3a Matters Winter 2025. The answer is on the next page.

And finally

My resolution was to read more so I put the subtitles on my tv.
 I was going to quit all my bad habits for the new year, but then I remembered that nobody likes a quitter.
 My New Year's resolution is to help all my friends gain ten pounds so I look skinnier.

And one for the mathematicians!
 Why do programmers always mix up Halloween and Christmas?
 Because 31 OCT = 25 DEC.

Thanks to onelinefun.com for the one-liners

My New Year's resolution is to stop procrastinating...starting tomorrow!

Poem for the New Year

Good Riddance, But Now What? by Ogden Nash

Come children, gather round my knee;
Something is about to be.

Tonight's December thirty-first,
Something is about to burst.

The clock is crouching, dark and small,
Like a time bomb in the hall.

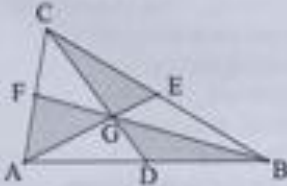
Hark, it's midnight, children dear.
Duck! Here comes another year!

Answers to Quizzes

Maths challenge

Question 1
Suppose that the ages of Angela, Brenda and Claire are A, B and C.
Then, $A = B + 2 = (C + 4) + 2 = 2C$ ie, $C = 6$
Angela is $2C = 12$, Brenda is $C + 4 = 10$, and Claire is 6.

Question 2
Triangles ADG and DBG have the same base length and height, and so have the same area. Likewise BEG and ECG have the same area, as do CFG and FAG. One of each of these pairs is shaded and the other unshaded, therefore half of triangle ABC has been shaded.



Quiz of the year answers:

Jan: Bradford
Feb: Boris Spassky
Mar: Mark Carney
Apr: American
May: Basel
Jun: Air India
Jul: Spain. On penalties.
Aug: Women's Rugby World Cup
Sep: Ashton
Oct: Sarah Mullally
Nov: Hong Kong
Dec: Crown Jewels

HIGH LANE u3a

OFFICER AND COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS FOR 2026

The Officers and Committee for 2026 are to be elected at the AGM on 11th February 2026.

If you wish to nominate a member for any of the roles, please complete the form appropriately and return it to the Secretary, Lynn Arnold, by the date of the monthly meeting on 14th January 2026.

Please ensure you have the permission and signature of the person you are nominating.

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	NOMINEE	SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE	NOMINATED BY	SECONDED BY
Committee Member				

Please note: people nominating and seconding must be members of High Lane u3a and not currently an Officer or Committee member