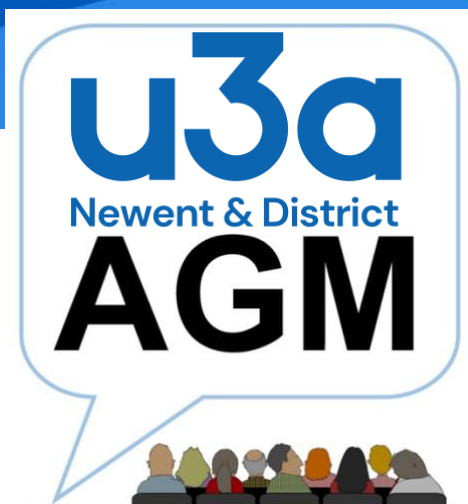


SUMMER 2026

# Newsletter

**u3a**  
Newent & District



## Reflecting on a successful year

As usual we held an Annual General Meeting following the rules laid down by the national body. This presents a more formal opportunity to reflect over the last year, to examine how our u3a is run and for members to comment or ask questions.

As members arrived they were treated to an amazing array of cakes to go with their cuppa as they settled into their seats. A huge thanks to the Garden Club members and others who contributed to providing the refreshments.

Having sent the relevant reports to all members prior to the meeting to view and consider, we were able to keep our AGM brief.

*continued on page 2...*

## Welcome

Rain or shine, we have another packed newsletter for you all to enjoy.

As usual, this edition will include:

- key dates to put in your diary
- news of recent events
- information about future events
- updates from the u3a committee
- spotlight on groups and members
- additional contributions from members.

Thanks to all who've contributed, your news and suggestions are always welcome. I look forward to hearing from you.

Helen Cole, Editor



## Save the date – monthly meetings

9 June  
Campaign to  
Protect Rural  
England

14 July  
Fakes and  
Fortunes

11 August  
Astronomy



...continued from page 1

Firstly, our thanks to Norman who kindly stepped in to chair the meeting in Steve's absence and did a great job overseeing proceedings with enthusiasm and good humour. After apologies and approval of previous minutes, and referring to The Trustees' Overview and Treasurer's Report, we are able to highlight some key points:

- membership steadily rising
- subscription fees remain the same
- finances are in good order
- an increase in reserve
- the introduction of payment by card
- the introduction of new groups
- the committee members were all re-elected.

Our Chair, Steve, in his report, was keen to emphasise what a great opportunity u3a offers to make new friends and to meet other like-minded people and enjoy themselves through the various interest groups and breadth of topics presented at our monthly meetings. He also acknowledged the contribution of the Group Leaders, those who help with refreshments and our committee. He thanked members for their ongoing support and encouraged them to get involved where they can.

After the appointment of an auditor – results of audit will be circulated when completed – the meeting closed.

There were no questions or comments by members at the meeting, but if you have any, please get in touch with the committee.

On display was the 'Groups Board' showing all of the groups and basic information for attendees to view and perhaps consider trying something new.





## Committee Corner

To provide updates on u3a matters and help members get to know their committee.

### Committee news

Our committee members were all re-elected at the AGM in May, plus we have a new member - welcome Elizabeth!

A list of current committee members is on the final page of this newsletter.

Vacancies:

- **Treasurer and Membership Secretary** – Jules kindly stepped in when Tony left as a temporary measure. She would now like to pass this on to someone else. Alternatively, we are considering reinstating this as two separate roles, as in many other u3as, with Jules continuing to be the Membership Secretary, leaving the role of Treasurer vacant. If you think you might be interested in this role, please get in touch with Jules who can provide you with information about it.
- **Committee members** – we have room for more and we welcome new perspectives or ideas in our discussions and decision making or additional help organising and running events. This can help enormously in the smooth running and future of our u3a. So, if you want to find out more about what's involved, then come along to our next meeting to see if it's something for you – you will be made very welcome.



The committee meets at 2-4pm on the 1st Tuesday of the month at the Newent Community Centre.

### Finance and Membership News

As I reported for our AGM, our finances have continued to increase over the last financial year. Income in all areas has been greater than predicted in our 2025/2026 budget, and costs have been substantially lower, thereby increasing our reserve. At the end of this last financial year, our bank balance stood at just over £4,000 – over £1000 more than at the end of the previous financial year. It seems our careful management of the finances and endeavour to increase our membership has been rewarded. This means we will have more scope to be flexible to help fund projects and groups in the future for the benefit of members. It also means that we're approaching the £5000 threshold whereby we could apply for charity status and enjoy some of the benefits that offers, e.g. Gift Aid and reduced costs for bank services.



Membership numbers continue to increase and currently stand at 171. We mainly rely on word of mouth from our members to increase our membership, so please continue to spread the word and introduce friends and neighbours. Members don't need to be retired or semi-retired. Our group is open to all adults who don't work full-time, regardless of age.

We currently have just seven members on our Committee and capacity for more members to join and contribute to the running of our u3a. I stepped into the role of Treasurer and Membership Secretary a year ago when Tony moved away out of necessity and as a temporary measure and would now like to pass this on to someone else. I'd like to continue with the role of Membership Secretary, so, if any of you out there are willing to step forward and consider the role of Treasurer, please have a chat with me or any of the Committee members to find out more.

## Renewal reminder

Just a quick reminder for existing members who haven't yet renewed their membership, to do so as soon as possible. If membership lapses, this will affect access to group activities.

There are various ways you can pay this but if you have difficulty completing the renewal process, then please contact Jules, our Treasurer and Membership Secretary, via our website contact page, who can assist you.

## Group News

In March I was lucky enough to go to a training day put on by the u3a South West Region at Taunton Racecourse. I realise not everyone would think this was lucky, but I was very impressed with the trainers from the national Head Office who guided more than sixty of us through two workshops.



The morning was spent thinking about how to encourage our members to volunteer in various ways and the afternoon was about how to set up and maintain interest groups - which I found very helpful.



Two of our groups now have new leaders. Being a keen member of the group herself, Sue Robinson has taken on the Table Tennis group on the third Monday morning of the month at the Community Centre.

Jane Ryan has become the new leader of the Singing for Fun group which meets on the third Wednesday afternoon of the month at the Community Centre. Jane has a wealth of musical experience and is a talented singer herself who enjoys helping others to find pleasure in singing.

We are still looking for a leader for the Garden group. Judy has very kindly enabled the group to continue visits this year, with help from Jules, but we really need one or two people to take on this role before the end of this year.



The u3a is volunteer led and volunteer run – for all / by all – so please consider how you might contribute to our u3a. It can be a one-off or something regular – big or small, but we need you! An example of this is the refreshments at our monthly meetings. The committee would like each group to take responsibility for one month – which would mean only doing it once every 18 months or so.

All materials will be provided, apart from tea-towels, and it needs only two or three people. Please think about whether this is something you could be involved with and have a word with your group leader. The groups who have volunteered so far are: Pickleball, Garden and Table Tennis.

Do check out the group lists below or the group pages on the website. If you'd like to try one of them, you can get in touch with the Group Leader or let me know if you'd like to join one by emailing via the Groups Coordinator link or have a word with me at one of our monthly meetings. Why not try something new this summer?

*Ingrid Cumming*  
*Groups Coordinator*





Week of month	Morning	Afternoon
Week 1	Mon – National Trust Tues – Walking Tues – Genealogy (family history) Wed – French Beginners Sat – Pickleball	Mon – Mah Jong Thur – Board Games Fri – Know Your Phone & Tablet
Week 2	Wed – WRENS	Mon – Scrabble & Rummikub <b>TUES – u3a MONTHLY MEETING</b> Thur – History Fri – Spanish Improvers
Week 3	Mon – Table Tennis Tues – Walking Wed – French Beginners Fri – Art & Craft Sat – Pickleball	Mon – Photography Tues – Crochet Wed – Singing for Fun Thur – Lunch Club
Week 4	Mon – Computer Improvers	Mon – QACKS Tues – Gardening Wed – Quiz Wed – Book Club Thur – Canasta

Group	Group Leader	Group	Group Leader
Art & Craft	Tryphena Hale	Lunch Club	Jules Everett
Board games	Jules Everett	Mah Jong	Elizabeth Hewitt
Book Club	Pat Ewing	National Trust	Jules Everett
Canasta	Sandy Darrington	Photography	Robin Lister
Computer Improvers	Robin Lister	Pickleball	Steve Martin
Crochet	Jules Everrett	QACKS	Janet Furtado
Events	Jules Everrett	Quiz	Janet Furtado
French beginners 1	Martin Cole	Scrabble & Rummikub	Liz Miles
French beginners 2	Sue Hedley	Singing for fun	Jane Ryan
Garden	TBC	Spanish Improvers	Alan Pitts
Genealogy	Gary Smith	Table Tennis	Sue Robinson
History	Ingrid Cumming	Walking	Chris Walker
Know your phone & tablet	Gary Smith	WRENS	Ginny Birkett

For more information about our groups go to the **Groups** page on our website at:  
<https://newent.u3asite.uk/groups>



## Health & Wellbeing

In March we attended the Health and Wellbeing event organised by Newent Doctors Practice at the Memorial Hall. We were invited along in recognition that socialising and participating in local community group activities such as our u3a offering, is extremely valuable, especially for people who have time to fill, perhaps feeling isolated or new to the area.



Members ran a stall promoting Newent & District u3a from 9.00am to 2.00pm. The event was very well attended, many of whom stopped at our stall to find out about who we are and what we offer. There was a lot genuine interest and many took away leaflets and information about groups they might be interested in. We even had interest from another stall, the Forest Voluntary Action Forum, who are involved in a range of communities and projects and felt they could promote u3a to some of the people they support.

Hopefully, the event has helped raise our profile within the local community and we look forward to attending similar future events.

## In the spotlight

Each newsletter we'll be shining a spotlight on one of our committee members. This quarter it's our new member, Elizabeth Hewitt.

I have been lucky enough to have two careers, the second arising from the growing interests of my first. I began as a teacher. Until my forties, I was involved in teaching, growing a family and building our house with my then husband. My interest in students' wider wellbeing led to my taking what at the time felt like the huge risk of giving up my job as a teacher to retrain as a counsellor.

I have never regretted it. I was so fortunate to be in the right place at the right time to be appointed to set up the Student Counselling service at a university, now a service all students at every university have access to, but then a relatively new idea. Working with students of all ages was always interesting.

I began to specialise in working with clients who had experienced trauma and I increasingly focused on this in my private practice as a trauma therapist.

Having a private practice meant that I could continue developing and working long after 'retirement'. I finally gave up working about four years ago. In some ways I miss it, but I have grandchildren and am lucky enough to live near my family. That is how I came to Newent. I joined u3a to meet people through the groups and to pursue the fun in games. So, I play canasta, rummikub and I am learning mahjong with enthusiasm and limited skill.

I hope to be able to support our u3a more widely as a new member of your committee.



*Elizabeth Hewitt*



## Enthusiasm for local wildlife



**Gloucestershire  
Wildlife Trust**

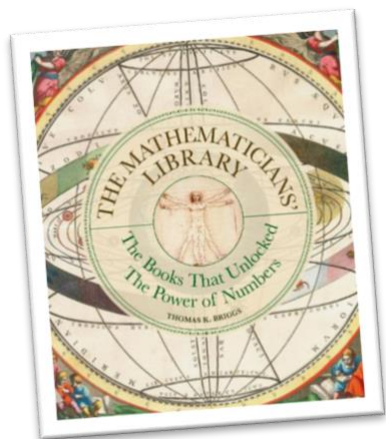
Members were treated to an enthusiastic talk by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust volunteer Barry Jackson.

Barry revealed the wildlife reserves of Gloucestershire, their wildlife significance and the work they do to preserve and improve each site.

Barry was very happy to take questions about the work of the Trust and views on local developments e.g. the impact of solar farms, wild boar etc.



## Mathematics is key



We had a great turnout for the talk by Thomas Briggs and how his enthusiasm for maths led him to write The Mathematicians Library.

Taking a selection of examples from the book, Thomas was able to relate a very interesting brief history of mathematics, including its beginnings (perhaps founded by a woman), early records of the use of numbers (on bones and stone), its development and impact of various cultures throughout history (e.g. the Greeks, Romans, Arabians etc.).

With the help of audience participation, Thomas was able to demonstrate some key changes and links to other disciplines and activities – e.g. architecture and building, trading, perspective in art, optics and more.

We discovered that the Chinese were using 'Pythagoras Theorem' 1000 years before Pythagoras himself!





## A national disaster



Fraser Gunn revisited us to give another fascinating talk, this time 'The Windsor Castle Fire'.

With 30 years experience as a firefighter who attended the fire, Fraser was able to provide a real insight into the events prior, during and after the fire.

The fire broke out on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1992.

The castle had its own firefighting unit and there were of course, plans and procedures in place in case a fire broke out, but with very poor vehicular access to the site, fighting and containing such a rapid and large fire was a real challenge. Fraser was able to explain how this was achieved, calling in extra help from other fire brigades and managing the evacuation of most of the castle's treasures such as priceless works of art, tapestries, rugs, furniture and artefacts.

An additional 35 fire engines from other brigades and 7 special units were involved and 255 fire fighters attended – five were injured. The army was also involved. The fire was attended for six days to ensure the fire was out and an incredible 1.5 million gallons of water were used during the operation.

The fire destroyed 115 rooms, including nine state rooms. The Queen was devastated and shaken by the event. She and Prince Philip played an active part in the restoration of the castle, choosing to redesign some areas to create a more comfortable home. It took almost 5 years to complete.



## Swap Shop reminder



Just a reminder that our Monthly Meeting Swap Shop may include books, jigsaws and other items such as spare garden produce or plants, unwanted gifts or household items you think might be of interest to others, so long as it's not too big to store in our cupboard, should it not be snapped up straight away!

You can buy, swap or donate.

Please note that items that have been with us for a while will be moved on to a charity outlet so we can refresh our offering.



## Group focus

### A lesson in looking and listening

In April, the Wrens Group, spent a very pleasant warm sunny morning in **the woods of Shaw Common** (*just beyond Oxenhall*). Firstly, we stopped at the Gwen and Vera Nature Reserve, that we had learned about the previous month, to view the last of the wild daffodils, for which this place is famous.



Then onto the Shaw Common car park. Here we loaded up with folding chairs and ID sheets, before heading into the woods, where we moved off the track to observe from our chairs, being silent for at least 10 mins. Very quickly we tuned into the cacophony of springtime birdsong around us, and those with the Merlin birdsong app, soon had the species listed.

The wild daffodils were now over, so it was time for other woodland plants to emerge, including wood anemone, violets, and bluebells, all using the light to complete their life cycle before the tree canopy shades the area.



We repeated this exercise in two more slightly more open areas. We also looked down to the leaf litter woodland floor, where a bee fly hovered and posed nicely for us on a leaf.

Over lunch at the Orchard's cafe, Gorsley, we realised the Merlin app had identified 18 bird species from their song, all in a small wood!

Nature is there if we pause, look and listen closely enough.

### The heart of an arboretum

The Wrens group May visit was to the **Cyril Hart Arboretum** (Forest of Dean), but the weather forecast was heavy showers, so should we go or not? The unanimous vote was we should risk it, and we were so glad we did, as the rain did not come and we had a pleasant gentle walk along the path in amongst the many specimen trees.





History: This arboretum was established by Ernest Wilson in 1910, with a collection of trees from China. Now there are over 200 trees to see. The arboretum was named after Dr Cyril Hart, a local much respected Senior Verderer.

We also came across the remembrance memorial to those Forest of Dean men lost in the battle of Imjin River in the Korean War. The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary was commemorated there in April.

We enjoyed 'beating' the weather and feeling the majesty of this place, before our tasty lunch in the nearby Speech House Orangery.

*Nature Appreciation (WRENS) Group*

## History

The History Group has had somewhat of a roller coaster start but our numbers are slowly increasing. We meet on the second Thursday afternoon of the month at the Community Centre and those who feel able to do so take it in turns to present a subject which we can then discuss.

So far, we have considered the Celtic Saints, Edward VIII, Marie Curie, and social history through the life of my grandmother Ada Evans.



Future subjects include the Historic Buildings in Newent (with a walk, weather permitting) in June, and Newent Memories in July. Do let me know if you would like to come along, even if it's just for one particular session. Also, ideas for future meetings would be welcome.

*Ingrid Cumming, History Group*



## Events Group outing



BAFTA Award-winner Lesley Manville (Phantom Thread) joins Aidan Turner (Rivals) in a striking new staging of Christopher Hampton's celebrated adaptation of the classic novel, where among the glittering salons of the super-rich, one misstep can mean ruin.

Marquise de Merteuil is a master in the art of survival. Alongside the magnetic Vicomte de Valmont, they turn seduction into strategy and weaponise desire. But when their alliance collapses into rivalry, the battle between them threatens to destroy everyone in their path. Filmed live on stage at the National Theatre, Marianne Elliott (Angels in America) directs this thrilling game of love, lies, and social warfare.

### LES LIAISONS DANGEREUSES

June 25<sup>th</sup>, 7.00pm at  
The Gateway Cinema, Ross-on-Wye

£16.50 per ticket



***STOP PRESS.... The Events Groups will be putting on another coach trip next September...watch this space...***

*The Events Group*

## Reminder to groups

When you meet in your groups please give our newsletter a thought by taking a photo or making a note about what you are doing, especially if you're doing something new or out and about and email them to Helen, the newsletter editor or via your group leader. The wider membership really appreciates seeing what different groups get up to and it's a great advert for prospective members visiting our website.



## Spring has sprung



**Propagation workshop** – In February the group attended a very informative visit to Radway Bridge Garden Centre where staff ran a propagation workshop, with lots of tips around taking cuttings and helping them establish. Everyone came away with a geranium cutting to take away and grow on.

Here's Helen's cutting going strong 2 months later from a single leaf!

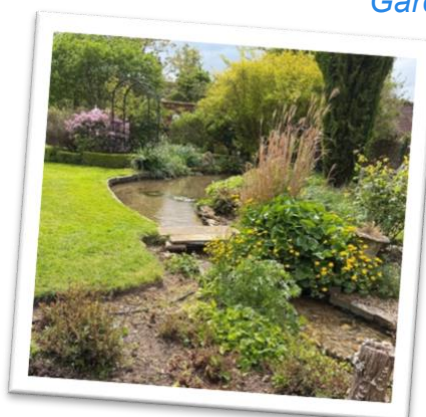


**Batsford Arboretum visit** – In March we took a sedate amble among the mature trees and stunning magnolias in Batsford Arboretum. We were also treated to a beautiful meadow of daffodils, a waterfall and more.



**Whitcombe House** – Situated in the picturesque village of Overbury, we were shown around by the owner who was able to answer all our questions. There were plenty of shrubs in flower, borders of perennials about to pop, and a lovely stream running alongside the boundary of the garden. Then on to The Yew Tree pub for delicious tea and cake.

*Garden Group*





## Pickleball rules!

The Pickleball Group, launched in February, continues to attract a good size and enthusiastic group of players. Those new to the game, under the guidance of Gary and Steve, have notably improved over the last couple of months as they have become familiar with the rules and getting their eye in to return the ball over the net. The scoring still presents a challenge for some but most of us have sussed it now.

If you fancy a go at this very enjoyable sport then get in touch with the Group Leader or Groups Coordinator. All are welcome.

*Pickleball Group*



## The joy of painting

***Experimenting with watercolour*** – There was quite a turnout for this ambitious watercolour painting session.

Helen started the session doing 'wet on wet' and using salt to great effect to create a wonderful background for a floral scene. While this was drying the group started another painting, using various techniques to create a seascape scene before returning to their original painting to add in flowers in their own chosen colour and style.



Following Helen's instruction and encouragement, and despite the challenge set them, the group produced some amazing pictures!

*Art & Craft Group*



## March meanderings

It must have been the early spring weather that brought out so many for our short walk in the Newent area. On a dry, cool and light grey day (ideal!), we walked through the arboretum, along a lane, down a road (single file here!), up a slope, through a couple of fields, admired the view and an ancient tree, back to the other side of the arboretum.



We crossed the road and took the footpath around the back of the school. We made a small diversion, to see the large earth dam used to keep back Peacock Brook's flood waters from Newent town. We walked down Culver St, admiring the historic buildings along the way, and onto refreshments at the Ark cafe.

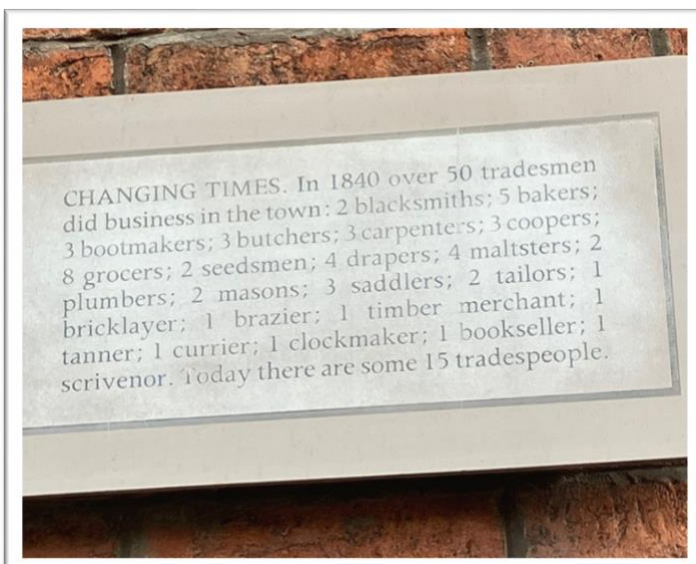
It was just under 3 miles and, at our casual pace, it took an enjoyable 1½ hrs.

*Ginny – Walk Leader  
Walking Group*

## u3a Members Space

**This area is dedicated to additional contributions from you, our members.** It could be an interesting fact, a recent u3a experience you'd like to share, a short poem or perhaps a relevant comment or observation. So long as it's brief and of course photos are always very welcome too!

### Amazing fact



I spotted this during a recent visit to Montgomery, detailing the number of tradespeople in the town in 1840 compared to today. I wonder what the equivalent list would be for Newent? Perhaps someone might know!

*Jan van der Lely*



Inspired by 'The Mathematician's Library' talk...



**Did you hear what the 0 said to the 8?**

Nice belt!

### Inspired to write

After receiving the email from Gary inviting u3a members to join the Newent Local History Society on a coach trip to Much Wenlock (the birthplace of the modern Olympic games), Trevor was inspired to find out more about it and then came up with this poem.

#### A Poem about Much Wenlock

Beneath the shadow of the Edge it stands,  
A limestone jewel in the Shropshire lands,  
Where black-and-white half-timbered houses lean,  
Around the winding streets, serene and green.

Here ghosts of monks still tread the Priory grass,  
Where ruined arches watch the centuries pass,  
And whispers of the Cluniacs still fall  
Along the stones that form the Chapter wall.

Beneath the Guildhall's sturdy oaken beams,  
The quiet present meets the ancient dreams,  
Where time moves slowly as the gentle breeze  
That rustles through the lychgate's shading trees.

But Much Wenlock is more than history's sleep,  
It holds a quiet flame it swore to keep,  
For here Dr Brookes, beneath the English sky,  
Once raised the bright Olympian banner high.

Before the world convened in Grecian light,  
This Shropshire town rekindled running's flight,  
And still the spirit of those early games  
Lives on beside the timbered, winding lanes.

A pocket of the past, so proudly kept,  
Where modern rush and hurried noise have slept,  
Much Wenlock rests beneath the limestone crest,  
A timeless corner of the rural West.

*Trevor Caine*

**NOTE:** *Cluniac monks were Benedictine monks from Cluny Abbey in Burgundy, known for strict adherence to the rule of St Benedict, elaborate liturgy and independence from secular control.*





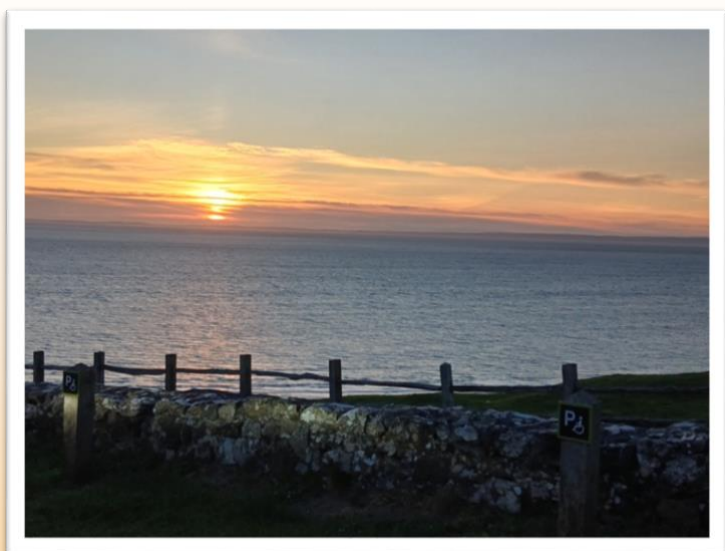
## Photograph of the quarter

With the arrival of summer, I'm sure many of you will be out and about taking great and interesting photos with your smartphone or camera. Perhaps you will take one or two that you could enter for the next Photo of the Quarter.

Thanks to all who entered this time – please keep them coming. Don't forget you can enter as many times as you like with one or two photos. Your photo doesn't have to be technically brilliant but may capture an everyday or special event, poignant or amusing mood and it must be taken by a u3a member.

The Photograph of the Quarter will be chosen by the previous winner. No prizes, just prestige! Photographs this time were chosen by Martin Cole.

Entries for next quarter to the Editor by 14<sup>th</sup> August



### WINNER

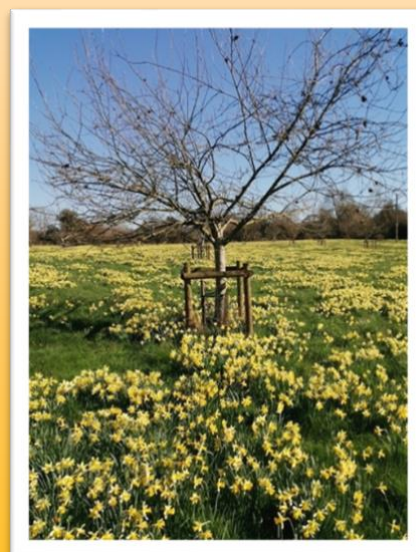
Sunset at Rhossili Bay  
*by Ingrid Cumming*

'Chosen because the photo has an element of poetic beauty. A snapshot of a moment, the end of a day well done, slipping away in a blaze of ethereal light.'



### RUNNERS UP

*by Pat Ewing*



*by Sandy Darrington*

## And finally...

Remember, if you know of anyone retired, semi retired or working part-time who might be interested in joining u3a, please share our newsletter – there might be something of interest to them.

### Committee members:

- Steve Martin (Chair)
- Gary Smith (Business & Committee Secretary)
- Jules Everett (temporary Treasurer & Membership Secretary)
- Ingrid Cumming (Groups Coordinator)
- Helen Cole (Newsletter Editor & Website Administrator)
- Sue Robinson
- Jane Ryan
- Elizabeth Hewitt



## One for the Diary

Each year we hold an Open Day to promote our u3a. The general public are invited to attend to find out about who we are and what we have to offer. We believe that there are many in Newent and its surrounding areas who would enjoy becoming a member and participate in our interest groups, talks and social events.

We hope members will spread the word and encourage others to come along.

u3a OPEN DAY



**Tuesday**  
**29<sup>th</sup> September 2026**

**2.00 – 4.00pm**

## Have your say

If you have any thoughts or ideas relating to Newent & District u3a that you'd like to share, please contact one of the committee members. We welcome feedback to help make u3a an appealing and enjoyable experience for all.

[newent.u3asite.uk](http://newent.u3asite.uk)

**u3a** learn,  
laugh,  
live