Visit https://witham.u3asite.uk/ for news and information

Witham and District (Essex) u3a

NEWSLINK

Your guide to latest updates and what's on our web site

Issue 5

October 2026

Fingers are crossed we have a new potential treasurer

AS a registered charity, one of the key requirements is that we have an elected treasurer in post.

Until this past month there was no volunteer in the frame at all to replace Dawn who has looked after our finances for the past six years and, under our constitution, has to stand down.

But we now have a retired bank manager in our ranks who is considering standing for the role at the AGM.

But, quite rightly, he is taking time to look into our current ways of working and checking them against the published operating procedures for u3as on the national website.

He is planning to attend the November 6 committee meeting to share his findings and request any alterations he feels necessary so he is confident we are financially secure.

Our u3a is not a bank so, I am sure, some change will be considered.

Ray Hardisty

Official notice of our 2026 AGM on page 2

Notice of Annual General Meeting
Witham and District (Essex) U3A

NOTICE is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of Witham and District (Essex) U3A will be held at 2pm on Thursday 26 November 2026 at the Social Hall, Witham Town Football Club, Spa Road, Witham, CM8 1UN.

Any motions for consideration, or nominations for election duly proposed seconded and signed by the nominee, must be communicated to the Secretary, Jackie Gascoigne, either through the 'Contact us' facility on our website, or at **secretary@withamu3a.uk** on or before 15 October 2026. The final agenda, together with the accounts, will be circulated before the meeting.

Officers
Chairman Ray Hardisty re-Elected 2025
Vice Chair John Foote Elected 2025
Treasurer Dawn Wilding Vacancy
Secretary Jackie Gascoigne Elected 2024

Ordinary Members of the Committee
Membership Secretary: Marion Vanovitch Elected 2025
Groups Facilitator: Jane Barton re-Elected 2024
Hazel Lawrence (up for re-election) Elected 2023
Sue Foote Elected 2024
Website Manager: Peter Booth Elected 2025

A new **Programme Secretary** to arrange speakers for 2027/28 is required: reports to the Committee but is not necessarily a member of Committee.

A new **Treasurer** is urgently needed, to commence Jan 2027

Under the terms of our Constitution, there can be
FIVE Ordinary Members of the Committee.

With the consent of the AGM meeting, where valid nominations have not already been received, nominations may be accepted at the meeting

Jackie Gascoigne
Secretary
Witham and District (Essex) u3a

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Committee notes

All Members' Mailing .... You have all received the benefit of a new mailing system to you all generated through our website.
The Newslink newsletter was sent to you all and you also received a reminder note of the subject of the monthly meeting talk.
The only real point to mention is please do not click reply on one of those emails or the entire membership could receive it.
Instead, set up a sepparate email to the sender.
At the moment the facility is in the hands of the Chair and the Membership Officer.

Chair's health checks ... Ray also let you all know a fortnight ago that he was going through a number of checks at Colchester Hospital to see whether he had diabetes or not.
He had been referred by his optician and medical teams were carrying out a wide variety of different procedures, some of which even involved stays in hospital.
The good news is that he has finally been given the all clear.
He is officially normal!
With all his computer stuff at home though it has meant this edition was delayed by more than a week. Apologies for that.

Our u3a Quiz Night ... the latest evening at the Henry Dixon Hall in Rivenhall was won, yet again, by a team put together on the night.
Congratulation s to Sue Foote, John Foote, Jane Barton, Margaret Bassett, and Di and Ray Clow.
We have one more evening this year.
That is a 7.30pm start on Friday, November 13. Bring own drinks and nibbles
It costs just £4 for the entire evening ... £3 to take part and £1 for a fun game with cash prizes.
Questions are kind and teams, of course, can be made up on the evening.
So couples and members on their own welcome.

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Delayed u3a tribute

IN August we said our final farewells to Hilda Ely a founder member of Witham and District u3a and stalwart of the Gardening Group.
For me Hilda was a constant in the Gardening Group, always part of it, always involved. She was the leader for several years and ran it with amazing efficiency.
She organised garden visits, speakers, Christmas social lunches, coach trips all without the aid of the internet!
She did it all by 'phone and letters written in her beautiful, neat handwriting.
She also ran the plant sales table at the U3A meetings, often selling plants that she had raised herself.
Hilda was a fountain of knowledge too. How often did I hear someone say "what's that plant/flower/shrub, tree?" and the response was invariably "ask Hilda, she'll know" and she invariably did know.
Who could possibly forget her January quizzes?
Hilda was always immaculately dressed, her hair and makeup always perfect, reflecting her natural pride she took in everything she did.
Her own garden was very much 'Hilda', full of colour from plants that she'd raised & cared for in her greenhouse.
Hilda was also a fountain of knowledge about wine! She very much enjoyed cooking and entertaining.
For me Hilda was the most amazing role model. Although she had become a little physically frail in the past few years her mind remained as sharp as a tack.
Rest in peace, beautiful lady.

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Shirley Mann

October Monthly Meeting Topic ... We welcome Lindsey Whitehouse on Thursday, October 22, to talk about 'My Life In Prison'.
Reports of where she has spoken elsewhere suggest we are likely to hear about the prison service rather than spending time in jail.
But with all the fuss nationally about the shortage of prison space and criminals having to be let out early, this is a very topical subject.
We look forward to a full social hall.

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Website updates





Church Visits ... Two reports have been added since the last Newslink. Members went to Great Mpalestead in September and studied the parish church of St Giles, top left.
They also uploaded details of their June visit to Bradwell-on-Sea, which included St Peter's On The Wall, top right.



Gardening Group ... visited a lush Ulting Wick. How did it beat the hosepipe ban. See report.



Strollers ... Rambled under big August skies between Halstead and Colchester. From the Chappel and Wakes Colne rail museum they took in footpaths around three villages and the popular viaduct. Read how on the webiste.

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Website updates

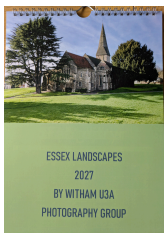






Wine Appreciation ... also added two reports since the last edition of Newslink.
The first was a private wine tasting event led by the Essex Wine School held in the Witham Town Council chamber.
And the second, an afternoon with French wine and food.

Creative Writing ... ignored the heatwaves and went for 'A Rainy Day' as their topic for September.
The best story was the one by Anne Charles about a father searching for his daughter is up on the website for all to read.
This month the topic is 'The Railway'.



Photography ... members have published their 2027 calendar using images from their files.
It will be available at the October monthly meeting.
Price is just £5.

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Website update



Walkie Talkies ... spent a September morning walking in and around Goldhanger which included some bird spotting in a reclaimed wetland.

Background to the Emergency Briefing film

RAY's email on his health included a flyer for The People's Emergency Briefing screening at Witham URC this week.

It is not a u3a event but forms part of a growing UK-wide programme of events designed to help ensure that both the public and decision-makers are clearly and honestly informed about the climate and nature crisis.

In November 2025, more than 1,200 MPs, peers and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport and the media gathered at Westminster Central Hall for the National Emergency Briefing - a landmark event bringing together leading experts to assess the UK's exposure to climate and nature risks.

The film brings experts together at that event including Professor Mike Berners-Lee (Chair), Professor Nathalie Seddon (Nature), Professor Kevin Anderson (Climate), and Professor Hugh Montgomery (Health) presented evidence to political, business and civic leaders.

This national event has now been adapted into a 50-minute public film, The People's Emergency *B*riefing, which launched nationwide and is now being screened in communities across the UK.

Details of times etc on the original flyer.

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Update on groups and co-ordinators

GROUPS need members to keep them functioning.
We have lost a number this year. It means there are fewer chances to dine out, go to local theatre productions or take part in board games.
And suggested ideas to take thewir place have gathered only limited support.
So, if there is anything you are interested in but your have not contacted Jane Barton, the group facilitator, or Ray Hardisty on the monthly meeting information table, please do so.
We are always looking for fresh ideas to maintain member interest in activities.
Please get in touch if you have a skill or interest to share.

Placing group reports on the web site

GROUP co-ordinators who have not yet uploaded details on activities onto the web site can still get help to do so.
Under the system that has been set up, words and pictures are submitted through user friendly forms.
So you type as you would an email and upload any photos in the way you would send as attachments to messages.
Then your reports will be placed onto the web site in the style demanded by other volunteers.
Contact web master **Pete Booth** for assistance.

The u3a is unique, exciting and joyful!

THE u3a is a unique and exciting organisation which provides, through its member u3as, life-enhancing and life-changing opportunities.
Retired and semi-retired people come together and learn together to learn with each other. Not for qualifications but the sheer joy of discovery.
The learners teach and the teachers learn.

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