



SPOTLIGHT on Skiddaw

Feb 2025

<https://skiddaw.u3asite.uk/>

Welcome to the February 2025 edition of **Spotlight**.

First, there are two very important dates for your diaries: Please mark **Wednesday 16th April** as the day you come to Skiddaw u3a's AGM. You know it's important! Details will be sent out as soon as possible. And, before that, of equal importance to all Convenors is the Group Convenors' Meeting on **Thursday 13th March**. *See inside for details.*

The Wednesday Monthly meetings promise relevance, variety and entertainment. Don't miss Niall McNicholas's necessary and authoritative talk on **Cyber Crime** this month. Then we can all look forward to two very different approaches to the **Lake District**: one from the Friends of the Lake District and one from our very own Anna Nolan on the fun to be had in fell walking.

And while we're on the subject of fun, be sure to read the sections on **Pickleball** and on **Ballroom and Latin Dancing**. It's fantastic to see these new groups flourishing.

Photographers, please note the details about the **National Photo Competition**.

And finally, did we mention the **AGM**?
Happy browsing!

MONTHLY MEETINGS

All meetings are in Crosthwaite Parish Room. Doors are open at 10 am when refreshments will be served and there is an opportunity to socialise. The meeting begins at 10.30 am and ends at 12 noon, unless otherwise stated. Entry will be charged at £1 for members and £1.50 for visitors.

19th February 2025

Niall McNicholas

Join us for an insightful session with **Niall McNicholas**. A cyber dependent crime specialist from Cumbria Police, who will share expert advice on safeguarding your digital world. Learn how to protect yourself from the latest cyber threats, identify common scams, and secure your personal information online.



19th March 2025

Communities and Landscape



How do we connect with the land around us? What is our role in helping understand and maintain the landscapes we live in and love? Find out more about **Friends of the Lake District's** work on and with the land. Learn about the properties they own and the pilot projects they are running there. Explore how you can get involved with conservation volunteering, land surveying, litter picking, fell care days, rural skills development and connecting with the landscapes you love.

16th April 2025

Skiddaw u3a AGM

commencing at 10:00
doors open at 09:30.

followed by

Larks and Laughter

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An entertaining hour of jocular musings and humorous verses by **Anna Nolan**, the longstanding Convenor of our intrepid walking group, the Roamers. Anna will regale you with frolicsome tales of her car-less exploration of the Lake District, where she has scaled all Wainwright fells at least 10 times over in addition to climbing all the Outlying Fells. But her amusing anecdotes will go beyond her mad Lakeland escapades and mishaps, being generously interspersed with frolicsome rhymes – many tapping into a rich vein of humour, namely the fact that she is Polish and has been known to get flummoxed by some aspects of British culture.

GROUP NEWS

All of the new groups described in the last edition of Spotlight are going well, so many thanks to everyone involved in setting up and running them.

If you have any ideas for new groups you would like to join, or better still, run please contact me.

Our Annual Convenors' Meeting will take place on March 13th in the Greta Suite of the Skiddaw Hotel, Keswick with a complimentary Buffet Lunch, details below. All convenors are invited, as the lunch is a thank you to our hard working and enthusiastic group convenors. If any convenor is unable to attend, they can delegate a member of their group to ensure the group's representation.

Group Convenors' Meeting Thursday 13th March at 11 am Greta Suite, Skiddaw Hotel

Programme:

11am Coffee

11.30am to 12.00pm Open discussion for convenors to raise any ideas or concerns.

12.00 to 12.30pm Mark Bradley, our Web Manager and Anna Nolan, Publicity Officer, will demonstrate to convenors how to update their group page on our website.

12.30pm Buffet Lunch

Group Convenors, please let Claire Darling know

groupscoordinator@skiddawu3a.co.uk if you planning to attend, have any dietary preferences and you wish to suggest any topic(s) for general discussion

Claire Darling, Groups Co-ordinator

Don't forget! Membership Renewal! It is time to renew your Membership. Your current membership expires on **28th February**. To make sure you can continue to enjoy all your u3a activities, you need to renew it in the next few weeks. Please note that the ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES REMAIN AT £12 per person.

Full details of how to pay can be found on the membership page of our website www.skiddawu3a.co.uk

Our preferred method is by BACS as this minimises visits to the bank. You can also pay by cheque. Cheques payable to Skiddaw u3a should be posted to the: Membership Secretary: Alyson Lehninger, 53 Helvellyn Street, Keswick CA12 4EP.

Cash can be delivered to Alyson Lehninger in an envelope marked Skiddaw u3a.

Your membership can also be renewed by cheque or cash at the February monthly meeting on 19th February at Crosthwaite Parish Room and by card, cheque or cash at the February **Afternoon Tea**, which is on **27th February** also at the Crosthwaite Parish Room.

Apart from paying your membership fees the afternoon tea is a great opportunity to socialise with fellow members whilst enjoying tea and an array of cakes. There is usually a light-hearted quiz. And all for just £2.

Whichever method you use to pay, **please remember to quote your membership number and name.**

Invited Groups

Ballroom and Latin Dancing:

As a new member of Skiddaw u3a, I was mightily impressed with the enthusiasm and friendliness of those who signed up for my combined Ballroom & Latin class. We have been focusing our attention on the Waltz and have touched on Quickstep, Cha Cha and Tango. It is great to report that after only 8 classes the group are now mastering the Waltz with ease. The pace of the class is dictated by the learning speed and commitment of the group and this is mixed with lots of laughter and at times some interesting footwork! The weekly (Thursday) class covers the basics from 10am and from 10.30 onwards we build the basic steps into short routines which are repeated to progress around the dance floor. Dancing is a great form of exercise offering both Physical benefits, enhancing coordination and balance, and Mental health benefits such as improving mood and memory, and reducing stress.

Peter & Karen have certainly found it rewarding "Janet achieves a welcoming atmosphere with an easy-going and fun approach. She doesn't seem to mind when we, as complete beginners, mess up. But she is encouraging, knowledgeable and supportive in our attempts to master the basics of waltz, cha-cha, quick step and tango. We're hooked! "

Janet too shares her enthusiasm "The Latin and ballroom class is for beginners and everyone is made to feel welcome. The dances are broken down into simple routines for those of us with two left feet! There is a real sense of achievement in managing to put a few steps together to great music. I can recommend the classes to anybody."

Janet Jones

Pickleball



In July 2024 a conversation between two golf croquet members went thus:

Ann: " I think I'd like to have a go at pickleball"

Barbara: " Great idea, let's go for it"

And that was the start of the Skiddaw u3a pickleball journey!

A chat with Cockermouth u3a's pickleball convenor established we needed a badminton court to play on. Claire, our Groups' Co-ordinator, was enlisted to help with finding a venue. Not a lot of luck in the town but Bassenthwaite village hall came up trumps. Their court, albeit slightly smaller was playable. Richard from Eden Valley pickleball came along with equipment and taught seven of us some basic rules covering serving, scoring, volleying and "dinkies"! And before long we were deemed good enough to play games and left to get on with it.

With the group now established, it was time to throw pickleball open to all Skiddaw u3a members. A taster session was organised in October at Penrith Leisure Centre where we'd optimistically booked three courts. Twenty-three members came along and were so taken with the game that they declared they were keen to continue. So, what is pickleball? A fast growing sport – it's a mixture of tennis, table tennis and badminton. The net is the same height as a tennis net; you play with a paddle which is larger than a table tennis bat and the ball is plastic with holes in it.

We now have on average 25 players each week.

Convenors: Ann Martin & Barbara Newton

News from the Committee

Happy New Year! I hope you enjoyed your Christmas and are looking forward to the year ahead.

I often start my article with a comment on the weather, which makes for strange reading when Spotlight is published a few weeks later. This year has so far seen some deep snow on the fells, followed by settled, calm weather but now we are in for a weather bomb with very high winds. Goodness knows what it will be like by the time you read this, but hopefully it will be a little warmer.

Our Christmas lunch on 3rd December was extremely well attended, filling the Skiddaw Hotel's back room to capacity. Our thanks go to Sue Grant for her efforts, not just for this event but for her years of service as Social Secretary. On the downside, we have no replacement at the moment, so if you want these events, including Spring outings to cities and gardens further afield, please do get in touch with me.

Our AGM will take place on 16th April, so please make a note in your diary to attend, as a quorum is required to validate the meeting.

We are also looking ahead to 2026 when we will need to replace our Chair, Treasurer, Group Coordinator and Speaker Secretary! With that in mind, please do get in touch if you have any interest in joining the committee as we can involve you at any time so you can see what these roles entail. Without a committee, Skiddaw u3a will not be able to continue, so please consider joining us to ensure the future of our organisation.

Finally, a word of thanks to Ted McArdle, who has for many years now been our Equipment Officer, looking after all the equipment held by our u3a. He has stored and checked it and arranged for PAT testing too. He has now finally handed it over to Martin Love, so thank you too, Martin, for taking this on.

John Hunston, Chair

Help Available for Updating Groups' web pages



Some of Skiddaw u3a's convenors under the tutelage of Mark Bradley, the Webmaster, are learning how to create and update their group's pages. More website workshops will be running, so, if any other convenors want to learn how to update their group's page, then get in touch with Mark at webmaster@skiddawu3a.co.uk If you can use a word processor then you can update your group's webpage.

L-R Sue Ashley, Popular Science.
Bill Richardson, Local History
Debbie Morgan, Watersports Anna Nolan,
Roamers. Standing at the back is Mark

The Oxygen of Publicity

"Without publicity there can be no public support and without public support every nation must decay" -Benjamin Disraeli

As editors of Spotlight, we are keen to encourage as much publicity for Skiddaw u3a as possible. Besides our own in-house publications, the Reminder is an excellent outlet for this and our own Media Officer, Anna Nolan, has developed a good working relationship with its Editors, making sure we appear as often as possible. Skiddaw u3a has a very broad range of activities on offer and it would be good to advertise more of these via newspaper articles. We asked Anna to provide some advice about writing articles for newspaper and other publications. Anna's advice is not just aimed at Convenors but also at all members: your experience as a group member is especially valuable. Articles for newspaper publication should be sent to Anna anna.nolan@btopenworld.com

Tips and hints on writing articles for publication

How to make one's writing attractive to editors and readers is the holy grail of all authors. Your opening gives you the opportunity to grab your audience's attention. That's where you set the scene, seize on a striking feature relevant to the subject or prepare the reader in some other way for what's to come. There will then follow an outline of your activity – preferably, in a light-hearted tone. A born satirist, I use humour whenever I can, *The Keswick Reminder* no longer toning down my frolicsomeness. Self-deprecation, in particular, seems to go down well with my readers, as do amusing personal anecdotes. But even where there is no opportunity for overt jocularitas, you could entertain the audience with your colourful language: why write "It was very windy" when you could use the more evocative "It was blowing a hooley"? English is an extremely rich language, and I am forever hunting for more vivid synonyms. So, lighten the tone and be as expressive as you can. The ending can be a bit tricky: what you don't want to do is cut the article off abruptly without some sort of punch line, conclusion or summing-up rounding your piece off. I may end with the likes of "What an unforgettable hike!", which, while not entirely satisfactory, are often paraphrased by *The Reminder* in their headline. Given that you are more than equal to the challenge of producing an engaging piece, get your creative juices flowing – and don't forget to include a photograph!

Anna Nolan, Media Officer



[This Photo by Helmut Arthaus is](#)

EQUIPMENT HELD BY THE EQUIPMENT OFFICER

Skiddaw u3a owns various items of equipment that are available for use by Groups as listed below:

- ViewSonic Projector (PA503S) incl. HDMI Lead and laser pointer
- Zoom (H2next) Portable Audio Recorder
- TourTalk (TT-C25S) 24 unit Tour Guide System
- 15m 4-way Extension Lead
- 6m 6-way Extension Lead
- *Optoma Projector**
- *Duronic Floor Projector Screen**
- *Cable Protector**

In order to borrow any of the above equipment please contact the Equipment Officer by email on equipment@skiddawu3a.co.uk stating:

1. What you want to borrow.
2. When you want to borrow the items (from ... to ...).
3. When you would be available to collect the items from High Hill, Keswick.

In the absence of a response to your email after 7 days, to ensure that it has been received, it is suggested that you follow up with a text to 07970 476838.

To allow for holidays and coordination with other groups, etc. (particularly during the summer period i.e. anytime during July or August) it is recommended that you contact the Equipment Officer as soon as you know what you require (ideally at least 4 weeks in advance) to ensure that the items can be made available.

Martin Love, Equipment Officer

A Date for your Diary
Wednesday 16th April 2025
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
10am prompt

This is probably our shortest but certainly our most important meeting and we need you to be there. This is your chance to find out what the committee has been up to in the past year, to put forward your ideas and to elect the committee members for the following year.

Skiddaw u3a is highly successful with over 600 members and almost 50 activity groups. Supporting this behind the scenes is the committee of Trustees elected from the membership. This year we have a vacancy for the role of Social Secretary. If you would like to know more about the committee or what's involved, please contact the Chair or any committee member. Full details about the AGM will be sent to all members in March.

So, please don't leave it to others. New committee members are essential to keep the organisation buoyant, relevant and exciting. We need you to help us keep Skiddaw u3a flourishing.

National and Regional News

National u3a announce their involvement in a news-style programme *Redefining Later Living* produced by ITN Business. Growing older is a privilege – and it can be a time of freedom, adventure and reinvention.

Redefining Later Living features organisations at the forefront of the sector, sharing case studies and contributions from industry. It seeks to challenge the traditional connotations around ageing and explores ways to embrace later life, manage postmenopausal changes and discover age-related medical developments.

National u3a CEO, Iain Cassidy, makes an appearance where he discusses the many benefits of non-formal learning and how we promote this within u3a. You can find the full programme, including Iain's interview, on the link below

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/our-impact/pushback-ageism#rll>

2025 u3a Summer School: August 12th to 15th at

Manchester Metropolitan University

Full details, including programme and booking form can be found on our u3a website or by following the link below.

<https://northwestregion.u3asite.uk/summer-school-2025/>

Join team u3a for the Great North Run

There is still time to apply to run for u3a at the *Great North Run*. Spaces are open to u3a members and their families. The event is taking place on **Sunday 7th September 2025** and we have five charity running places available. If you are interested, please email fundraising@u3a.org.uk by **Friday 28th February** - heading your email: Great North Run. Please include the u3a you or your family member belongs to and if you have run a half-marathon before.

North West Region Photo Competition 2025

Shine a light and highlight what it means to be a u3a member. Capture your group as it Learns, Laughs, Lives. Full details on Skiddaw u3a website

<https://skiddaw.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/u3a-photo-compertition.pdf>

Closing date 28th February.

NOTICEBOARD:

Help available via Cumbria Action for Sustainability: Cold to Cosy Homes
Cumbria offers free and independent energy saving advice and equipment to help you make your home warmer, more comfortable, and cheaper to heat. You can access free telephone advice from a qualified adviser. You may also be eligible for a free home visit, free equipment and access to grants and other support.

You can contact the service on **01768 216 500** lines open 10am -3pm, Monday – Friday.

For further information see the cafs website <https://cafs.org.uk/cold-to-cosy-homes-cumbria/>

Help available to members

Accessibility: Would you like to attend Monthly Meetings but need and would welcome assistance? Please note though, this is not a taxi service for all. Mileage costs at the appropriate rate would be paid by the passenger to the driver. If you would like to request assistance to attend Monthly Meetings, then please contact Tom Rennie by email. skiddaw.u3asite.uk/accessibility or phone 07761 796615

Appeal for Drivers

Tom Rennie, who organises help with transport to monthly meetings, wonders who would be willing to help if needed. If you are interested, please contact Tom via email: skiddaw.u3asite.uk/accessibility

More Help available for Members.

Using Zoom: The Third Age Trust website links to step-by-step seminars on how to set up a Zoom account on phones, tablets and desktops. This is the link to the relevant page: [Your Guide to Getting Started with Zoom Products](#)

Buddies: we have a system of "buddies" linking members with experience of Zoom and other virtual meeting tools with members who would like to learn how to use them. Are you interested in having a "buddy" to help you or would you be willing to help other members? If so, please contact Gill Frances via the Spotlight email address: spotlight@skiddawu3a.co.uk

Hearing problems: We have several members with hearing difficulties. Whilst there are different forms of hearing loss, it can be helpful to explore what others have found useful. Member Chris Knowles has worn hearing aids for many years and is willing to share his experiences with members who find it difficult to hear at meetings, talks or Zoom events. Chris can be contacted via email: chris.knowles@maketechwork4u.co.uk

Last Words



A beautiful barn owl seen in the Hospice at Home charity shop in Keswick.
Was she looking for Harry Potter Books?

EDITORIAL POLICY:

Contributions should be sent to the Editors via spotlight@skiddawu3a.co.uk. Groups invited to contribute to an issue of Spotlight should try to keep their contribution to approximately 200 words, if possible. Any entry can include photographs which should be submitted as jpeg or png.

Deadline for submissions to the next issue is April 20th, 2025

Editorial Team: Gill Frances, Chris Lewis & Maggie Potts