



# SPOTLIGHT on Skiddaw

Feb 2026

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

Happy New Year, everyone.

Perhaps *"it's a dry January for me"* or *"I must walk three thousand steps a day carrying a backpack"* were on your resolutions list? Or maybe, *"I must stop making resolutions"*? Whatever else you choose to do, please don't forget to renew your **u3a annual membership**. Information on how to do that is inside. Likewise, do please insert the date for Skiddaw's **Annual General Meeting** on Wednesday the **15<sup>th</sup> April** into your diary.

And convenors, a special plea to you to note that Wednesday **March 4<sup>th</sup>** is the time for all convenors to attend the heartfelt **'thank you, convenors'** meeting and lunch at the Rugby Club.

Just one more thing – and then you can proceed to enjoy this jam-packed mag – Mark Bradley has written a really important article on the need for people to come forward to train as either the Beacon Administrator or Website Editor for your u3a. Get in touch with Mark at [webmanager@skiddawu3a.co.uk](mailto:webmanager@skiddawu3a.co.uk)



# 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.

## 18<sup>th</sup> February 2026 The Bromleys of Keswick

**Mark Hatton** has entertained us at Keswick several times with his research and understanding of local history. His latest research has been into the story of the Bromley family of stonemasons, five generations of which traded from their workshop at High Hill Keswick. They produced exceptionally high quality monuments & memorials that still grace many local sites. This illustrated talk explains the history of the Bromley family business and the development of their artistry.



## 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026 Craft Apprentice to Crime Author



**Ron Salmon** is a Cumbrian crime author, based just outside Cockermouth. He writes as Harry Navinski and has spoken at many Rotary Clubs, WIs and other Cumbrian U3As.

His talk covers his Royal Air Force career, his time on voluntary service in India on anti-human-trafficking work, then moves into his period as a crime writer. This part of the talk describes his protagonist, his five books, the writing process, and publishing, finishing with a questions session. The protagonist in his crime books is a mid-forties female Detective Chief Inspector, leading a team of detectives in Edinburgh. Unlike Rebus, Suzanna McLeod is well educated, intelligent, highly analytical, can imagine herself in the mind of the criminal. She is a superb leader, coaching, encouraging and developing her team, resulting in the best conviction rate in Scotland.

## 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026 Skiddaw u3a AGM followed by My Endless Summer -USA by Bike

**Commencing at 10:00** doors open at 09:30.

Several years ago, **Ian Findley** left his home in Cumbria and cycled to New Zealand. Following the success of that trip he then cycled across the USA. We have heard about his first trip when he spoke to Skiddaw u3a in 2023, so now we are delighted to get the story of this second long ride.

## **Don't forget Membership Renewal!**

It is time to renew your Membership. Your current membership expires on 28<sup>th</sup> 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 [Membership Skiddaw](#). Our preferred method is by BACS as this minimises visits to the bank. You can also pay by cheque or cash.

Cheques payable to "Skiddaw u3a" should have your name and membership number on the back.

Envelopes containing cash or cheque may be delivered by hand to either:  
Membership Secretary: Jim Pawson, An Cala, Applethwaite Keswick CA12 4PP  
or: Sylvia Pilling, 25 High Hill, Keswick. CA12 5NY

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

## **GROUP NEWS**

### **New group: Social Striders**

We have a new walking group, Social Striders, starting this year. Judging from the number of members who have expressed interest in the group, there is an ongoing appetite for walking groups. This group, led by Sarah Elliott, will meet at varying venues and times, please contact Sarah via the Groups section of the Skiddaw u3a website for further details.

Members with well-behaved dogs are welcome to join the group, although many of those wishing to join the group do not have a dog.

### **Group Convenors Meeting and Lunch Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 11 am at Keswick Rugby Club**

This year's ACM will take place on Wednesday March 4<sup>th</sup> at Keswick Rugby Club from approximately 11am until 2pm. Further details to follow shortly from Claire.

**Please note change of venue**

**Claire Darling, Groups Co-ordinator**

## Invited Groups

### One-off groups: the Christmas experiment

For the first time, in December 2025, Skiddaw u3a ran some extra activities during the traditional period of the Christmas break. What happened?

We are very happy to say that all three activities went ahead. Kelvin Rushworth's 'Introduction to Uzbekistan', which took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> in the Quaker Meeting House, attracted a really good crowd of interested listeners who stayed at the end of Kelvin's illustrated talk to examine the beautiful clothes and other items from Uzbekistan which he had brought back to this country. Thank you, Kelvin!

Gill Frances's discussion groups on reading poetry and on how conversation works were small by comparison but full of enjoyment.



What have we learned from this experiment? We've learned that there is an appetite for extra activities. We've learned some practical things – like which dates to pick and what things are likely to interest people. And we've decided to repeat the experiment in 2026.

If you would like to join in, if you have suggestions, if you think you might like to offer a morning's or afternoon's activity, or would just like to chat about the possibility, then please contact Gill at [gfkewick@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gfkewick@yahoo.co.uk)

**Gill Frances**

## Chair's Report

**\*\*\*\*\*NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS NEEDED!\*\*\*\*\***

I'm going to be very boring in my comments this time, as we really do need some more new blood on the committee. At the AGM in April we will need a new Group Coordinator, Publicity Officer and assistant Beacon Administrator and assistant Web Manager – see separate advert in this issue. For the 'assistant' roles, we are looking ahead to Mark Bradley's retirement from the committee next year, as these aren't the sort of jobs that can be taken on

quickly with no training. For the other two roles, we need people to step forward urgently as the current incumbents step down in April.

Skiddaw u3a can only operate if we fill these posts, so if you have a little time to spare, please do come forward to help. Currently we have a policy of trying to keep roles for a period of three years only, so that those volunteering know their contribution is time limited. This should encourage new committee members, but it only works if there is a steady flow of members wanting to come forward.

Email me at [chair@skiddawu3a.co.uk](mailto:chair@skiddawu3a.co.uk) if you'd like to know more about any of the roles advertised.

In other news, our Christmas lunch was very successful, with a near-full house. Thanks to Paul Titley for organising and the Skiddaw Hotel for their hospitality. A couple of short quizzes added to the social atmosphere; I hope all who attended enjoyed the event. Paul is already looking at this summer's outing on 5<sup>th</sup> June, so save the date in your diary.

I hope you have a very happy 2026 – the days are lengthening and I am personally already looking forward to Spring!

**John Hunston, Chair**

**A Date for your Diary  
Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**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 roles of Groups' Coordinator and Publicity Officer. 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.

## **IT Job Vacancies**

### **Beacon Administrator and Website Editor**

I currently hold the Beacon and Website Administrator posts. At the end 2027 AGM I will have served my full committee term of 6 years and will be retiring as Beacon Administrator. I have found it to be a rewarding and a key role on the committee. By advertising it a year early, I can give my replacement a gentle introduction, so they can be confident at the handover!

There is a lot to Beacon and users expect the admin to be the expert, ready to train them and sort out their problems so a new administrator in April 2027 could find themselves thrown in the deep end! How much better if an assistant admin could be found beforehand with plenty of time to come to grips with the system and see if the job really suits, could this be you?

Our SiteWorks website has been in operation since late 2023 and uses a system called WordPress which is no more complex or difficult to operate than a word processor. I am happy to continue as the website administrator but feel it would be advantageous for our u3a if someone would become the Site Editor. Why? I ended up in Carlisle Infirmary last May for emergency surgery and a 6 day stay, what if things had not gone well! At the moment there is no one else to take up the reins.

I don't want to fill this with a lot of technical mumbo jumbo and obviously a background in computer things helps but an interest and enthusiasm to keep Skiddaw u3a moving forward is more important. If you are interested in helping our u3a by considering either of these jobs please get in touch with me at [webmanager@skiddawu3a.co.uk](mailto:webmanager@skiddawu3a.co.uk) After all, joining a u3a is all about learning new and interesting stuff, is it not?

If you are interested and want to see what is involved, I am happy to give virtual behind the scenes guided tours.

Regards.

**Mark Bradley**

## National and Regional u3a News



### u3a Festival 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2026 York University

After the success of Festival 24, national u3a are delighted to announce Festival 26. U3a member, Margaret Fiddes, is part of the team organising the festival. She says, "We're aiming to make this a bigger and better festival with even more members taking part, bringing us their enthusiasm and knowledge to lead workshops, music groups, talks, sports and performances." If you'd like to volunteer at u3a Festival 26, please get in touch via [festival@u3a.org.uk](mailto:festival@u3a.org.uk)

#### **Bookings for accommodation and tickets are now open.**

To stay updated with u3a Festival Updates, sign up to our u3a Friends Newsletter and tick that you would like to receive Festival Updates

**Interest Groups Online Fair:** Explore online learning with the *Interest Groups Online Fair*, taking place from 11-13 February, and learn something new from the comfort of your own home.

*Interest Groups Online* is u3a's online learning community with over 150 online interest groups. The fair features 10 free taster sessions with highlights including *Sign Language*, *Exploring Progressive Rock* and *Dance Exercise*.

You can explore the topics on offer on the u3a website

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/what-we-do/events/educational-events>

## NOTICEBOARD

### **Stop! Think Fraud.**

Older people are often a target for online fraudsters. There have been a number of scams recently relating to the Warm Home Discount Scheme (see below). Cumbria Police have developed a number of tools for helping people recognise and deal with online fraud. The weblink below gives access to their most recent newsletter and information. You can sign up for the newsletter, for their Fraud Protection Toolkit and for fraud alerts for your area.

[https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCUMBRIA\\_POLICE/bulletins/3f7528f](https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKCUMBRIA_POLICE/bulletins/3f7528f)

or you can find more advice and information from [www.thinkjessica.com](http://www.thinkjessica.com)

## Warm Home Discount Scams

The Energy Saving Trust has released some information about scams that have been circulating regarding the Warm Home Discount.

People have received various texts and emails asking them to provide bank details or complete a form in order to receive the Warm Home Discount. Those who are eligible to receive the Warm Home Discount will receive a letter in the post from the government and payment will be sent directly to the energy provider.

See also <https://stopthinkfraud.campaign.gov.uk/protect-yourself-from-fraud/>

\* \* \*

## Finding The Money: Tuesday 24th February 2026

**7pm Quaker Meeting House, Keswick** (Tea and Coffee from 6.30pm)

Four local people would like to start a discussion group about Modern Money in Keswick. Just turn up for a presentation and discussion on the basics of Modern Monetary Theory, exploring how the Government can pay for its policies with the aim of setting up a regular discussion group on economics and progressive policies.

\* \* \*

The Allerdale Players Proudly Present

### THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ a pantomime

Braithwaite Village Hall  
Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> February 7 pm  
Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 1 pm & 7 pm



**Tickets available from:  
Braithwaite village store, The Royal Oak, Braithwaite  
or call 0773 1506 729**

**£7 adult £3 children  
Licensed Bar**

**Proceeds to Local Charities**

## HELP AVAILABLE TO 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: <https://www.u3a.org.uk/how-to-guidance>

**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](mailto: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](mailto:chris.knowles@maketechwork4u.co.uk)

**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.

Monthly Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month apart from August and December when a Monthly Meeting will not be held. The meetings are usually held in Keswick or nearby village halls.

If you would like to request assistance to attend Monthly Meetings, then please contact Tom Rennie by email. [accessibility@skiddawu3a.co.uk](mailto:accessibility@skiddawu3a.co.uk) or phone 07761 796615

If you feel you could offer to become a volunteer driver, please contact Tom using the above contact details.

## Last Words

### Three Wise Monkeys – Plus One!

(Cartoon submitted by Jim Pawson)



The architect and designer Sir Giles Gilbert Scott died on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1960. As well as designing Liverpool cathedral he designed the iconic, red British telephone box.

### **The Phone Box on the Corner**

It stood there in all weathers,  
a sentry guarding entry to an old world,  
glass framed in poppy red  
and a proclamation of love  
sprayed on the door.

It brought me the news-  
plans for the spare room, Dad's  
sciatica, benedictions from the dog-as I  
fumbled with change  
two hundred miles from home.

The pips would go then so  
would I, returning each Sunday,  
and finally no longer, until  
time travelling back to the town  
I left thirty years ago,

it stops me in my tracks,  
standing on the corner  
of a new century – the phone  
now a defibrillator  
in a box still saving lives.

**Brian Bilston**

(Poem submitted by Chris Lewis)

#### ***EDITORIAL POLICY:***

Contributions should be sent to the Editors via [spotlight@skiddawu3a.co.uk](mailto: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, 2026**

**Editorial Team: Gill Frances, Chris Lewis & Maggie Potts**