

u3a Todmorden Groups Report

March 2026

New Groups

We're going to try to set up some new groups following the response to a recent survey of members. Initial meetings will be free of charge to participants. Groups will be run according to u3a self-help principles and will need to become self-sustaining.

If you are interested in one of the new groups but can't make the time of the first meeting, please let me know what other times would work for you. The regular meeting time for each group is to be decided at the first meeting, and preferences can be taken into account then.

Artificial Intelligence

An inaugural meeting for this group has been called on the 30th March at 1:30 pm in Tod College. Please see the Group or Calendar entry on the u3a Todmorden website for more details. All members will be welcome to attend, whether they've told me they are coming or not.

e-Bike

An initial meeting is being arranged and will be announced shortly.

English Language and Linguistics

An inaugural meeting for this group has been called on the 14th April at 1:30 pm in Tod College. Please see the Group or Calendar entry on the u3a Todmorden website for more details. All members will be welcome to attend, whether they've told me they are coming or not.

Music

An inaugural meeting for this group has been called on the 25th March at 1:30 pm in Tod College. From the survey responses, we may have the potential to establish different groups catering to different genres and possibly playing as well as listening. For that reason, I've not posted any information about the new group(s) on the website yet. All members will be welcome to attend, whether they've told me they are coming or not.

Pickles and Preserves

An initial meeting is being arranged and will be announced shortly.

Established Groups

Alfresco History and Archaeology

We had a good turnout at Bolling Hall, Bradford for our February excursion on a Sunday. A majority came by car, but two members made the trip by train and bus. The visit was planned and arranged, including a lunch at the nearby Lodge cafe, by Andrea Ransom, who did a very thorough job.



Figure 1: Alfresco History visit to Bolling Hall, Bradford

Whilst the visit was self-guided, there were plenty of interpretation boards throughout, and we were well informed about the successive owners, and the part played by the house in the English civil war.

There will be no outing in March. The one planned for April is to Ordsal Hall in Salford.

Art Appreciation

We were going to show a film about the photographer Trish Murtha but despite many pre meeting trials our convenors couldn't get this to play and it was substituted for a film about Fay Godwin. A splendid substitute as it turned out.



Figure 2: Fay Goodwin

Filmed in the 1980s we learnt about her life. She had always enjoyed photography and became interested in ancient history found in the countryside. She did not like picturesque photos of the countryside idealising it in an unreal way. Divorced, her husband died and she got cancer. She gave up the usual treatment and put herself on a restricted diet of vegetables. Desperate for money she took up an offer of collaborating with Ted Hughes on his book of poems *Remains of Elmet*. The Calder Valley suited her interests perfectly. In all she collaborated on 9 books.

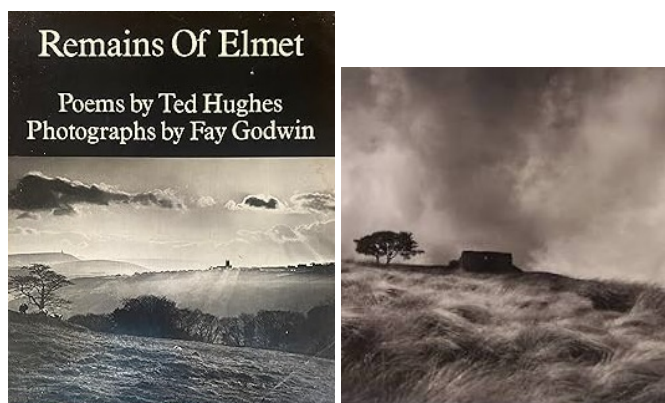


Figure 3: Book covers by Fay Goodwin

Our convenors are retiring next month and a discussion followed as to how and if the group will continue unless more members come forward to fulfil the necessary tasks.

At our April meeting on the 2nd at the Fielden Hall, Dominic Vince will give a talk on the life and works of the artist David Bomberg. Any queries to Tristan at tristan.molloy.tm@gmail.com.

Art Club

Art Club does not provide tuition but does give members plenty of mutual support, encouragement and advice as well as the opportunity of exploring their own ideas and projects in a variety of techniques and media from collage to watercolor and watersoluble oils. From time to time the convenor will suggest a topic by way of inspiration which can often be interpreted widely and freely. The current topic is "Distant Lands". There is an emphasis on the group being an opportunity for the members to be creatively playful and to experiment and to learn from each other. Over the next few months members will spend a portion of some meetings sharing techniques and topics of particular interest.



Figure 4: Works by Art Club members

We meet alternate Wednesdays between 2 and 4pm at Fielden Hall the next ones being on the 18th March and 1st April. The Group is looking to recruit new members and anyone interested is very welcome to come along for a trial session to see if it's right for them. For further details contact Judith Malone on 01706812890.

Board Games

The Board Games Group met again in March in our usual time-slot of 2 pm on the second Monday of each month. We welcomed another new member, and saw several games of Qwirkle, Ticket to Ride and Sequences being played with some thoughtfulness and a side-order of laughter. In future we will be charging attendees £1 per session to cover the cost of refreshments, and to hopefully build-up a war-chest that can be used in due course to buy new games - or indeed to replace those that get worn out! The painted images on our Qwirkle set are fading fast... If you think you might find this kind of play stimulating and enjoyable you can always drop by when we're meeting to see what we're up to, or else contact the convenor, Jim Botten at jroyd33@gmail.com or telephone on 01422 844987.

Book Group

At our March meeting, we discussed *On the calculation of volume* by Solvej Balle, the Danish author, who has been

thinking about her novel for decades – but it only spans one day. Her heroine Tara Selter finds herself trapped in the 18th November day after day after day, even though she keeps trying to find a way through and out.

An intriguing aspect of our discussion was that, even the minority who found parts of it ‘tedious’ still admired the writing. The style is meticulous, startlingly original and beautifully translated. Is it a love story, philosophical, a thriller? One member suggested Balle had created a new genre, ‘unmagical realism’. It’s been a big international hit since its first publication in 2020 and we could all see why.

There are six more volumes of this story: will we invest in more? One member has already read two and others are planning at least one; quite something for an outwardly modest story of a woman living a quiet life in the French countryside.

Beginners’ Bridge

We have now met for a number of sessions and we have up to now and are averaging around 24 members attending each session, on Tuesday 17th March we will be holding our next session which is going to be a session on rNT openings and basic responses.

If you would like to join the group please drop me a line at Andrew3967@googlemail.com or why not just come along on Tuesday afternoons to the Hare & Hounds on Burnley Road from 2pm - 4pm we meet every Tuesday in the month except the second Tuesday due to the canasta group using the venue.

Canasta

Two more successful afternoons playing Canasta again this month, with all five new members returning for a second time, and another new member on the horizon.

If you would like to come along and see what the game of Canasta involves, please get in touch with Barbara at barbarawigley@btinternet.com for more information and the rules we play by.

Our next meetings will be on Monday 23rd March and Tuesday 14th April at the Hare & Hounds 2.15 – 4.15pm.

Coffee Club

Paid up members of *any* u3a branch who happen to be in town on Monday 13/4/26, are invited to call into Honest John’s at 6 Rochdale Road Todmorden where between three and thirteen of us meet once a month at various times between about 10:30am until about noon. Some of us stay for the full time and even for lunch whilst others prefer to just pop in for a few minutes

Normally the meetings take place on the first Monday of the month but, on Bank Holidays, a week later. We have exclusive use of the private room on the right just after mounting the steps of the building but before entering the bar itself, drinks are ordered from the room so there is no need for anyone to venture into the bar area. The staff accept both cash and card payments

Craft Club

The members met on February 20th to recycle empty pill pots into useful items. The majority made storage containers which resembled ‘Dusty Bin’ from the TV programme but some made plant pot covers which using fabric and artificial leaves/flowers.



Figure 5: Craft Club upcycling pots

The following session was the first part of two (second will be on April 17th) in which a decorated shoulder bag will be made. The fabrics were selected, cut out and prepared for sewing.



Figure 6: Craft Club - pots with fabric covers

We shall not be meeting on April 3rd as it will be Good Friday.

Creative Writing

Our first meeting in March produced pieces of writing from this month and February, and included memories from long walks in different parts of our country. On the same theme, we heard about a similar trek in Spain many years ago where the writer spent a night in a hotel run by Nuns. Only on leaving did they realise they’d spent the night in an old peoples home, and wondered what happened to the room’s previous occupant. In March, the themes are ‘Spring’ and ‘Marching Orders’, and our first meeting of the month was well attended.

Enjoyment of Wine

The meeting scheduled for 27th March has been cancelled because of insufficient numbers to pay for the room. Please let Bob Hayter know if you can attend on 24th April.

First Tuesday Readers' Group

We discussed Zadie Smith's *The Fraud*. Most of us liked it, but some were not fans of the pseudo-historical genre.

French Improvers

We continue to improve our Listening skills. The most recent realisation is that the French we hear spoken by French people sounds nothing like the French we learnt to read and write at school. Fortunately Geraldine is giving us tips to understand what we hear! Speaking skills must however continue at a simple level ; no let up on verb practise yet, I'm afraid!

Next session 23rd March. 1.30pm Pex Tenement room, TL-CCH.

Gardening

The Gardening Group is arranging a visit to RHS Bridgewater in March to see the spring bulbs. As spring arrives, we will start arranging visits to each other's gardens. The Group is open to all u3a members. To join, please contact the Convenor, Fiona Ryland at fio.a.ryland@gmail.com

Genealogy

The Genealogy Group now meets twice a month on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Honest John's 10.30 – 12 noon for discussion and swapping of information/stories etc and again on the 4th Tuesday of the month at Todmorden Library to carry out research with help from the library Local History Volunteer and fellow members of the Group – we have a lot of experience within the Group and are happy to help beginners get started on the fascinating journey of tracing your Family Tree.

Our topic for discussion this month was Marriage and Divorce and as well as swapping family stories, we discovered that up until 1929 boys could marry at 14 and girls 12, with parental consent of course! This was essential for under 21s up until 1969 when it was reduced to 18.

As far as Divorce was concerned prior to 1858 you either had to get the Pope to declare the marriage "null and void" or after the mid 1600 by Act of Parliament which was extremely rare and expensive with only about 300 divorces being granted between 1670 and 1858, of these only 4 women were successful in obtaining a divorce from their husbands as they had to prove both adultery and life threatening cruelty. After 1858 it did become easier to obtain a divorce, and by 1922 ten assize courts across England and Wales were allowed to hear certain types of divorce cases, making divorce more easily obtainable by the less well off. It wasn't until 1971 that divorce by "mutual consent" was allowed which is the most common way of filing for a divorce today.

Our next two meetings will be Tuesday 24th March at Todmorden Library for research etc. 10 – 12 noon and Tuesday 14th April 10.30 – 12 noon at Honest Johns when we will be looking at Family Names both First and Surnames.

We have room for new members – please contact Barbara – barbarawigley@btinternet.com if you are interested.

German

The last few weeks have been dominated by German literature for children since two of our Members have recently become 'German' grandparents. We have also been concentrating on methods to improve our spoken German, employing in particular the popular shadowing technique, which encourages imitating native speakers. Finally, we've doing quite a lot of grammar. Today, for instance, we'll be looking at the passive and combining it with modal verbs and the subjunctive.

I'm already rubbing my hands in sadistic anticipation!

Andy

07957 722078

Golf for Fun

We are coming out of the winter period now. Winter greens are occasionally in operation. Nevertheless, we still play regularly, weather permitting, at 10 am Mondays and 1.00 pm Tuesdays. Anyone wishing to try us out (for free), please come along half an hour before. Drop me an email to let me know. For all inquiries, please contact the convenor, John.Allison@3-C.Coop. Our web page is https://u3atod.org.uk/u3a_groups/golf-for-fun/.

Local History

There was no meeting this month but Local History group members delivered two very interesting talks during the day of Inspiring Talks About the Women of the Calder Valley on the 10th March.

Angela Greenwood started the day off with a fascinating talk about her great, great aunt Janie Greenwood a founder member of the Todmorden Shakespearian Society and her great aunt Vera who won a King's scholarship to attend Liverpool University to study Science. Angela is seen in the photo in front of her illustrative boards with her cousin, Penny Aspden, who came to hear about their esteemed relatives.

Susan Cockcroft ended the day with an excellent talk on Sarah Fielden and her impact on education in Todmorden. Her well illustrated talk also gave an insight into the conditions of the time.



Figure 7: Speakers at "Women of the Calder Valley"

The middle of the day was taken up with a talk entitled 'Anne Lister who and what she was by Rachel Lappin followed. After lunch by Jill Liddington talked about the Halifax suffragettes The picture above shows Rachel and Jill in front of Jill's many books on these two subjects. The next meeting of the Local History group is on Monday 13th April at 10.30 am in the Hawkstones room when Barbara Wigley will be talking about the Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter from Friday February 28, 1913. Barbara will examine the newspaper of that day looking at articles and adverts page by page.

Lunch Club

The first lunch of 2026 was held at the Aya Sophia restaurant in Hebden Bridge. It was over a year since we'd been there and enthusiasm for the venue was reflected in the a good turnout. A change of cuisine was a welcome respite after traditional Christmas food and the kind of comfort food we've been eating through the winter. Anyone who would like more information about the Lunch Club should contact denisetyas@me.com These are social as well as dining events so you're assured of a warm welcome whether coming individually or as a couple.

Mah Jong

A very quiet month, though Barbara narrowly missed a second Mixed Pungs in consecutive months by the narrowest of margins. Alas, she picked up her last tile from a discard, and Mixed Pungs requires every tile, including the last one, to be picked up from the wall. Nevertheless, another display of grit and faith!

Our newer members have continued to grow in confidence, and a couple have graduated into playing with the more experienced. It is delightful, however, to be able to carry on with our learners' table: players can thereby learn at their own pace and move on only when they are comfortably confident to do so.

I think it worth recording last month's message about membership a second time.

"We've had a good number of new members recently, and while they are all most welcome this has put some pressure on capacity. The convenors have therefore decided that:

1. We will not be taking on any further beginner members for now, but will operate a waiting list. We'll try to run the learners' table until the current beginners feel they are settled in;
2. Given restrictions on space and the number of Mah Jong sets we will be limiting the number of players in each session to 20 – ie 5 full tables. We haven't exceeded this number as yet, but if we do it will be "first come first served".

We meet every Wednesday from 14.15 until 16.15 in the Hare and Hounds in Todmorden. Please contact Emily Watnick if you are interested - emilywatnick@gmail.com - but, as reported above, we are afraid for the moment you will have to be placed on a waiting list.

Modern Greek

We are progressing steadily and have looked at Type C verbs which are either passive verbs or deponent verbs with an active voice but no active form. We also looked at past participles and gerunds.

Online Zoom Talks

On the 12th March the group enjoyed a talk by Baz Aveyard entitled 'Katherine Swynford: Myth and Reality. Baz will be talking about his relative Katherine Swynford and her relationship with John of Gaunt. Baz told us how Katherine, the daughter of a knight and herald, married John of Gaunt (the third surviving son of Edward III), lifting her from mistress to Duchess of Lancaster. It was a rare and almost shocking move, allowing Katherine to end her life not in scandal, but in legitimacy and respect. Her children, the Beaufort's, would become key players in England's future, directly influencing the line that would become the Tudor dynasty. Our next meeting is on the 9th April starting at 7.30 pm when it will be something completely different when Tony Kay tells us about One Hit Wonders. Some members may remember Tony from last year when he had members dancing around their sofas!



Figure 8: Our next online talk

If you wish to attend in the comfort of your own living room just let the convenor, Michael Astrop, know on mwastrop@gmail.com.

Philosophy

At the last meeting we discussed the life and works of the French philosopher Simone Weil. The next meeting will be at Roomfield Baptist church at 10.15 am on April 13th when the topic for discussion will be understanding understanding with reference to Trigger's broom

Pickleball

This group meets on Tuesday mornings from 10-11am in the main Sports Hall at Todmorden Leisure Centre. We are currently unable to take on new players, due to the popularity of the game. To contact the group and be put on the waiting list, please see the group's page on the u3a Todmorden website.

Poetry Appreciation

The Poetry Appreciation group met (on zoom) on 12th March and considered poems on the theme of *AIR*.

Housman's *On Wenlock Edge* was very apt as there was a gale blowing at the time. John Donne's *Air and Angels* puzzled us mightily, as did a poem called *Interior w /ceiling fan* by Kayo Chingonyi.

G. M. Hopkins's *The Windhover* and Gary Whited's *My Blue Shirt* completed the list.

The next meeting will consider 'Translation' on Thursday 9th of April.

Practical Art

In our sessions in early Feb. we did some research into the decorative art styles of indigenous cultures looking at Australian Aboriginal Art, New Zealand Maori Art, North American Indian Art etc. etc. We sketched designs on paper at first and then transferred our designs onto stones and slate using acrylic paint. In our last class we had a complete change and by popular demand we used water-colour to depict sea creatures using a 'wet on wet' technique. This coming Friday we are going to try our hands at a simple drawing/ painting of part of an interior of our house or another building. We are also happy to provide introductions to and demonstrations of the uses of different media to newcomers to the group and total beginners and extend a warm welcome to new members of all abilities.

Psychology

8 of us met to talk about options of where to live as we get older - downsize, move into sheltered housing, stay put? Several of us had suffered the major upheaval of a move for practical reasons and would be reluctant to move again, having no regrets about the change (except perhaps a loss of 'status'). We were intrigued by the idea of Co-Housing, especially for people living alone, without immediate family; unfortunately there is very little availability for this. We also noted that Calderdale Council seems to be offering much more support to assist older people to 'age in place'; this has to be a cheaper and more desirable option than moving into residential care.

Next meeting on 9th April at Honest John's. Our group is not accepting new members at present. Next topic is Dementia and strategies to cope with memory loss.

Quiz

The quiz group meets on the 4th Thursday of the month at 10:15 at Tod Methodists, and we would welcome any Tod u3a members who would like to try their hand (or should that be brain!) at one of our quiz sessions.

Science

We have twice monthly on-line meetings from 10.00 am to 11.30 am on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday mornings of each month.

We have now completed the OpenLearn course "Particle physics" and the supporting video lecture from CERN on

the same topic. The general feeling was that this was quite a challenging topic. The OpenLearn course was easier than the CERN lecture, but it was useful to have two different perspectives.

Following this, we watched an introductory video on Artificial Intelligence, which is a very interesting and fast-moving topic. The group may re-look at AI in the future but, as this is going to form the basis of a new Todmorden U3A group, we will see how that group develops first.

Our next topic will be science behind "Wind Power" starting on the 25th March. Again, this will be based around an OpenLearn course supported by videos.

If you would like to know more about the group, then please contact the convenors John Readle (john@readle.org.uk) or Jack Horner (marktarhorner@gmail.com).

Scrabble

The Scrabble Group continues to welcome new members, of whatever standard. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month, starting at 2 pm downstairs at Central Meths, with added tea and biscuits, all for a mere £2 per head. If you'd like to join us please get in touch with Jim Botten at jroyd33@gmail.com or by telephone on 01422 844987, or just drop in on one of our sessions for a taster. We always have room for more players (of whatever standard).

Senior Moments Concert Party

Concert Party (Senior Moments) usually meets at the Fire Station Community Room for rehearsals on Tuesday afternoons at 2pm. We are in the process putting together a revised program to use in performances for local groups including Care Homes and Hospices. Please feel free to come along and meet us.

Social History

The group finished reading Vera Brittain last month and will be reading the autobiography of ASA Briggs the historian born in inter war Keighley. However when we finish this book we intend to look at our first post war autobiography by James Walvin who grew up in Failsworth between Oldham and Manchester. We meet on Friday March 20 at 10 15 am at the Methodist church, Todmorden.

Strollers

This group takes a break over the winter months. With the convenor having stepped down, there are currently no planned outings.

Table Tennis and Badminton

This group meets in the main sports hall at Todmorden Leisure Centre on Monday afternoons from 3-5pm for the bargain price of £2 per session. New members playing either game are welcome.

Walking Cricket

The group have been meeting regularly on Thursday afternoon in preparation for the groups up and coming games against the following teams - On Thursday 12th March the Todmorden tigers U₃A team travelled away to Burnley for a game of walking cricket, the game was played in good spirit and by two quality teams. Burnley won the toss and batted first scoring a good score of 138 runs for 5 wickets and following a short break Todmorden started their reply to the Burnley total but at the end of the game the tigers came up short by 50 runs having scored 88 runs for 7 wickets, following the game tea / coffee and biscuits was served. We will be looking to play Burnley again during the summer months at Todmorden hopefully outdoors at Todmorden Cricket Club.



Batting in the game against Burnley are Mark Leah and Mike Hodgson. Bowling with style is Mike O'Hara

On Thursday 26th March we will be hosting Oldham at Todmorden Sports Centre 2pm - 4pm followed by a cricket tea. If you would like to join the group just drop me a line at - andrew3967@googlemail.com or come along to Todmorden sports centre on a Thursday afternoon 2pm - 4pm except the third Thursday of the month due the U₃A monthly meeting.

Walking

Our February walk, led by Anne Wear, finally had good weather to venture out for our first outing of the year. We enjoyed a five mile walk on a breezy but dry day, starting in Todmorden passing Dobroyd Castle, then dropping down onto the canal and onwards to Walsden. From there we walked up Ramsden Wood Road to the Dam then bore left to walk through the old stone quarry up to Middle Ramsden where we stopped for a refreshment break. The walk continued over Ragby bridge, onto Inchfield Road, then down a steep path through Pasture Side Wood back to Walsden Station, returning to Todmorden via the canal towpath. The walk was challenging in places but we all enjoyed it. The next walk will be on Tuesday 31st March (always the last Tuesday of the month)

World Film

Our last film this season, to be shown on Friday 27 March, is set in Tuscany. It is a French, Italian, English language film with English subtitles starring Juliette Binoche.

Our final programme this academic year of 6 films to be shown in April/May/June will be sent out to all members very soon.