

LEEK u3a NEWSLETTER

May 2026

Dear Members

Firstly, thank you to those members who turned up for the AGM on the 6th May. We got the formal business out of the way quite quickly and then there was some excellent entertainment by the Folk Ensemble group who had stepped in at very short notice – a big thank you to them.

Spring has sprung and the last few days have been lovely after what felt like a very long dark winter: apart, of course from the week-long respite in Torquay in early January. A good week with moderate weather. We have a trip booked to the same hotel for the same week in 2027 and there are a few places still available. There's a sign up sheet in Norton House.

Finally, a reminder that the Norton House committee are keen to recruit new trustees/committee members. If you're interested please contact one of the u3a committee or the Norton House committee.

Enjoy the weather and your Leek u3a activities as we head into Summer.

Keith Jones Chair, Leek u3a

Norton House AGM

Norton House and the Watson Centre are a vital resource for Leek u3a and are run as a separate charity, with it's own trustees and committee. They are currently looking for new members to join them in their important work. If you are able to help, please contact a member of u3a or Norton House committees. The AGM is on Friday 22nd May, 4pm at the Watson Centre for all to attend.

Leek u3a, Norton House, Fynney Street, Leek, ST13 5LF

u3a

<https://leek.u3asite.uk>

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Robert Roche's AGM address...

This is a summary of my address to the recent Leek u3a AGM – please contact me by leaving a note in Norton House or by emailing me at robrokeleeku3a@gmail.com if you have any queries about Safeguarding, fire safety evacuation procedures or Tech Support.

My main areas of work during the past year have been on ensuring that leek u3a operates with an up to date safeguarding policy and culture.

It has always been very heart-warming to myself and the committee how caring for each other our members are.

There is a caring culture of looking out for each other without being unduly nosy, which is quite a hard balance to achieve (!), so thank you all for looking out and caring for each other.

During the year we have offered informal support and advice to members and have pointed people to outside help and agencies when it's been necessary.

During spring of 2025 I ran three two hour long safeguarding awareness sessions which were attended by up to 50 people in total – I hope that those who attended found them informative and useful.

I would like to hold some more safeguarding awareness sessions during the autumn – If you are interested please put your name and contact details on the sheet on the wall in Norton House , or email me; and I will organise some more sessions.

We will have separate sessions for group leaders and for members as the sessions are slightly different, so if you care for somebody and you may have concerns about their welfare please let me know and I can give you confidential general advice. You do not have to wait until autumn if you would just like to have a chat and maybe some pointers about where to seek help.

The Leek u3a Safeguarding policy is on the Leek u3a website if you wish to look at it. It has a lot of useful information in it which is covered in the Safeguarding sessions.

You may not be aware that I am also a committee member on the Norton House Trust committee.

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In that role I reviewed the building fire safety and evacuation policy in 2024 and I've had another look at it to make sure it still meets our requirements.

I recently answered a query from a member who said they were unaware of the fire safety and evacuation policy. Hard copies of the policy are pinned to the Norton House notice board in the main foyer of Norton House.

Can I ask group leaders to please remind members of the existence of these policies periodically, especially when new group members join groups to ensure that everyone is aware of them and how to exit the buildings safely in the event of a fire or other hazardous incident.

If you have any questions about these policies and procedures please contact me.

Tech Support – we have been running tech support sessions on Saturday mornings over the last 2 years. Because of low attendances recently we have suspended the sessions and we are reviewing the need that members have for them.

If you could leave me a note for me in Norton House, or email me, I will have a look at the feedback from you on how we can best support members with their tech.

In my Norton House Trust member capacity I would like to remind you that you are all welcome to join us at our AGM in the Watson Centre on Friday the 22nd of May starting at 4pm.

If you would like to learn more about the essential role that the Norton House Trust plays in ensuring that Leek u3a continues to benefit from our fairly unique building resources and facilities; or if you would like to support the trust in a practical way please come along and have a chat with us.

Every time I go to the Norton House Trust AGMs I learn more about the history and the pioneering people who secured and built up the resources that we use and who ensure they are kept running and maintained viably.

It would be really great to see a good turn out of Leek u3a members.

Robert Roche

Vice Chair: Leek u3a & Norton House Trust.

GROUPS

Groups with spaces...

The following groups currently have spaces
If you would like to join, please contact the leader.

African Drumming	Mixed Crafts
Badminton Groups	Needlecraft
Bowls 3	Painting Watercolours
Bridge Groups	Patchwork & Quilting
Canasta	Petanque
Chance to Dance	Pickleball 2
Chess	Political and Economic Discussion Group
Cook the Book Club	Railway Modelling Enthusiasts
Crib	Reading
Cross Stitch	Singing for Fun 2
Everyday Philosophy	Snooker
Family History 2	Spanish Beginners
Folk Ensemble	Swimming
Flower Arranging	Table Tennis
Gardening	Tai Chi 2
German	Tennis
Handicrafts	Traditional Music of the British Isles
Happy Crafters	u3a Singers
History Topics	Ukulele
Italian Intermediate	Walking (All Groups)
Jazzy Folk	Walking Netball
Mah Jong 1	Whittling and Wood Carving
Melodic Lines	

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Cook the Book Club

Pick a book. Cook a dish. Share a feast. Good food, good company — once a month

Leader: Helen Setnicka-Zambas. Tel: 07505 131137

Monthly on the fourth Monday of the month, evenings 6:00pm-9:00pm, starting 25th May in Norton House

Sign up in Norton House

We choose a book together, borrow it from the library, and cook from the chosen book for 3–6 months. On meeting day, each member cooks their own dish fresh at home and brings it along to Norton House where we serve up a gorgeous three-course meal to enjoy together. Relaxed, sociable and utterly delicious. There are great facilities to reheat/finish off dishes: in the microwave, oven or hob-top. Plenty of equipment. Occasionally in each others' homes for a change of scene if members are happy to host. We can accommodate most dietary requirements. Occasional cooking demonstrations or food-related trips out, as and when things come up.

Helen, the group leader, will help plan and coordinate each session with you, to put together a three-course spread from our chosen book. Think of Helen as your kitchen companion, there for tips, ideas and moral support. No pressure, just pleasure!

Join our Philosophy Group

Each week we look at the words of philosophers past and present and interpret how their ideas can guide us in the modern world. How their thoughts can affect our life today. Open to everyone, especially beginners. Come for stimulating discussion and fresh perspectives.

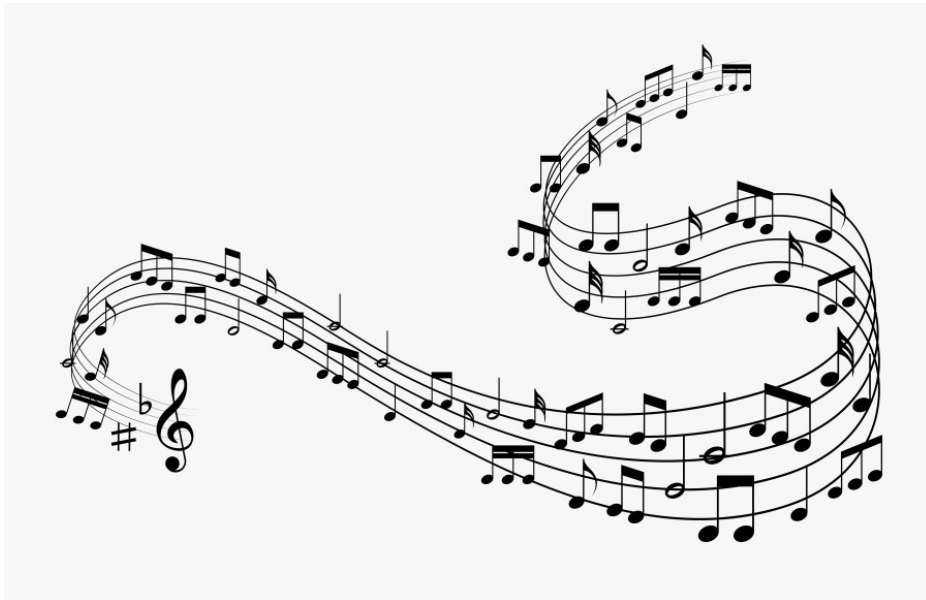
Science & Technology – Leader Needed

We are looking to see whether anyone would be interested in running a Science & Technology Group at u3a. This could be leader-led or fully collaborative, depending on what people prefer. The focus would be on science and technology—building our knowledge through the history of major discoveries, exploring new scientific breakthroughs and looking at emerging technologies such as AI and related innovations. If this appeals to you, please let us know.

Trad Folk

The “Traditional Music of the British Isles” group which meets on Wednesdays at 11.30 reached its First Birthday last week and we decided to celebrate by having a discussion about our future.

We felt the name was a bit of a mouthful and we should shorten it to Trad Folk. We will still predominantly play the same music but we will be less proscriptive and include things not written by “Anon” but sounding rather along the same lines. Those attending felt the sessions are enjoyable and should continue, but since we have a few with grandparents’ duties we feel that we should break for school holidays.



We have had about 25 names on our roster over the year with 13 staying the course. About 8 or 9 of those attend each session and that is a good number. We will happily accept a couple more if anyone is interested. We would be keen to accept a female singer happy to take leads. The voice can be the only instrument with no need to play anything. A percussion player would be a great addition too, but not a full drum kit!! If you’re possibly interested, pop a nose in one Wednesday and listen to what we get up to.

We had an evening session at Denford’s Holly Bush pub in March and that was well received by audience and enjoyed by performers. We plan to make this a regular event and in due course I will publish dates and times so that anyone who wants to participate or just be audience can join us.

I think this is you up to date with our plans so I will leave you there and hope to see some of you in the future.

Mike Shadforth, Trad Folk leader

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Leek U3A Long Walkers' Group begin The Steel to Cotton Trail

In the first half of the 20th Century, Sheffield's steel workers and Manchester's cotton mill workers escaped their polluted cities, to reach the clean air of the Peak District. They travelled by train on the Hope Valley line. Today, the Peak District National Park exists for all of us to benefit from and the Hope Valley line still runs between the Steel and Cotton cities.

2025 was particularly special, as it marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of the modern railway.

On the 27th September 2025, The Steel to Cotton Trail was launched. It is a 63 mile trail from Sheffield Railway Station to Manchester's Piccadilly Station. This new walking trail showcases the opportunities presented by the Hope Valley line, both for the steel and cotton workers of the past and for the continued enjoyment of those walking in the Peak District National Park today and in the future.

The Leek U3A Long Walkers' Group have taken up the challenge of walking the Trail over 7 days - one day per month, walking between two railway stations and using the trains to get to the start of the walk, return to our cars at the end of the walk or both!

In April we walked the 11 miles between Manchester Piccadilly and Hyde Central Station, along some of Manchester's canals.



Points of interest along the way included Portland Basin Museum, a free-to-enter museum within the renovated Ashton Canal Warehouse, that combines a lively modern interior with a peaceful canal side setting, and the Fairfield Moravian Settlement, a unique settlement founded in 1785, with cobbled streets and Georgian Houses - you may have already seen parts of it if you watch Peaky Blinders.

In May the group will walk the next stage between Hyde Central Station and Strines Station.

