MINUTES of WOOLER U3A ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held in The Cheviot Centre on Monday 14th September 2026

1. Attendance: Janet Allmey, Michael Allmey, Helen Astley, Sarah Boden, Pat Boyd, Lesley Cade, John Campbell, Sue Chapman, Susan Coulson, Carol Daly, Jan Davies, Peter Davies, Yvonne Gallagher, Veronica Gilbert, Terry Gilbert, Maggie Harker, Alison Hilton, Andy Leng, Steve Mellor, Andy Middleton, Judith Oughton, Jenny Pollock, Barbara Rattcliff, Rosanna Reed, Joyce Robertson, Peter Tansley, Robert Taylor, Joan Thomas, Joyce Watts, Katy White, Sylvia Williams. (31)

2. Apologies: Sue Cook, Anna Ormsby, Hazel Rathbone, Rachel Sinton, Cynthia Stokoe.

3. Minutes of previous AGM, 15th September 2025 (*circulated previously*): Yvonne Gallagher's name had been omitted from the list of attendees. There being no other comments, Peter Davies proposed acceptance, with the amendment. This was seconded by Rosanna Reed and carried with no votes against.

4. Annual Reports: The Chair and the Treasurer presented their Reports, appended in full at the end of these Minutes. The Treasurer pointed out that while the full Annual Report will not be issued until after the end of the Financial Year, current Income and Expenditure charts will be posted on the u3a notice-board for members' information.

The Chair thanked retiring Committee members Maggie Harker, Judith Oughton and Colin Watson for their service; and presented Maggie and Judith with flowers. He also presented flowers to Jan Davies in thanks for organising Speakers throughout the year.

Group Leaders attending then presented their reports.

Pat Boyd, whose Exercise Group closed earlier in the year, hoped a suitable volunteer would be found to start it up again; she also read Pat Brown's Quiz report. Veronica Gilbert reported on the continuing success of the two weekly Table Tennis sessions, and invited members to join regular viewers at Opera & Ballet Group. Joan Thomas reported on another successful and very varied year for History Group; and Andy Middleton, (Bridge), reminded members that his friendly group encourages novices, who can receive tuition beforehand. Maggie Harker was pleased to report that Board Games has outgrown its location in the Library, while Philosophy for Fun is full to capacity at present. Peter Davies (Geology) mentioned that they may be looking for new speakers; while Bob Taylor, (retiring from Art Appreciation), repeated the need for someone to come forward as Group Leader. Joyce Robertson, who has opened Painting & Drawing to encompass any art or crafts, mentioned that she and Rosanna Reed hoped to organise a u3a outing to the Great Tapestry of Scotland next year.

Group Reports, including from other Group Leaders unable to attend the meeting, are appended at the end of these Minutes.*

5. Election of Secretary and Committee Members:
Committee Members** who have not reached the limit of service, including Chair, Vice-Chair, and Treasurer, have agreed to stand again. Veronica Gilbert proposed re-election to their current roles, seconded by Maggie Harker. Vote carried with no objections.

Sarah Boden, John Campbell and Susan Coulson, nominated for election, introduced themselves before the vote.

John Campbell was nominated by Douglas Kinsey and Judith Kinsey for the role of Secretary. Peter Davies proposed election, seconded by Joyce Robertson. Vote carried with no objections.

Susan Coulson was nominated by Veronica Gilbert and Jill Baxter.
Pat Boyd proposed election, seconded by Maggie Harker. Vote carried with no objections.

Sarah Boden was nominated by Emma Whinham-Air and Elaine Kilgour. Sylvia Williams proposed election, seconded by Rosanna Reed. Vote carried with no objections.

Anna Ormsby, (unable to attend), was nominated by Alison Davies and John Campbell. Joan Thomas proposed election, seconded by Veronica Gilbert. Vote carried with no objections

All those newly elected were welcomed by the Chair.

6. Date of next AGM: The Chair announced that the next AGM will be held on Monday 13th September 2027.

The Treasurer mentioned a drop-in session for renewal of membership, 16th October 2026, 10.30 to noon in the Cheviot Centre.

The Chair then thanked all present for attending, and closed the meeting.

Minuted by Judith Oughton

*Reports appended in following pages are the written versions submitted to the Secretary.

**Committee members re-elected:
Michael Allmey, Pat Boyd, Janyce Davies, Peter Davies (Vice-Chair), Steve Mellor (Chair), Andy Middleton (Treasurer), Joyce Robertson, Sylvia Williams.

Chair's Annual Report 2025-26

Well, it's been a busy year so to try and cover it all in a short report is a bit of a challenge.

We have completed our required statutory meetings throughout the year with the required numbers of attendees to remain legal: a big thank you to our committee members for making that happen.

Our working group looking at the feasibility of leaving the u3a organisation reported back; and the committee agreed its recommendation to remain, but also to monitor the situation regularly.

We have spent some time agreeing policies so we can legally remain a charity; though we are dedicating some resource to personalise these somewhat this year.

We have continued to grow our membership and are up to 147 from 137 this time last year, which is great - but more groups are reaching capacity so we urgently need more Group leaders/organisers. So any one with an urge to start a group or even help run a existing one please, please contact a committee member we can provide assistance both financial and personal.

Another success this year is we will have a full Committee compliment with keen fresh blood joining at these elections, though we are sad to be losing Maggie's experience as Committee member and past Treasurer. She is the one to blame for me being here, as she suggested to me I might enjoy one of the groups and four years later here I am. Plus we are losing Judith as our Secretary after a busy period for her, keeping Peter followed by myself in a legal and organised state; though she has agreed to remain as membership secretary which will be an immense help.

And I could not allow their leaving without showing my thanks in a small way for their dedication to Wooler u3a!

We have enjoyed a series of varied and very interesting speaker meetings, all ably organised by Jan as she has for several years now, and I feel I should also show my thanks for all her work.

I will not go into our Financial status as Andy will report on that but again a big thank you for his support this past year. My last thanks is to my Vice Chairman Peter whose enthusiasm for our little u3a is greatly appreciated.

One disappointing decision we had to make this year was the cancellation of the non speaker meetings. We could not seem to attract our members enough for them to attend. After trying several changes we reluctantly agreed that we would cancel all but the Christmas one - so please, please attend that one.

So to sum it all up we have kept legal, grown our membership and are financially stable which I suppose means we can declare it a good year.

Steve Mellor
Chair, Wooler u3a

Treasurer's Report AGM 14th September 2026

Our bank account at the end of August was £3,385, which is £574 more than our balance of £2,811 this time last year.

Late last year most banks introduced fees for Community accounts. We have been successful in moving to a Charity account, which will save us approximately £114 per year. Our account details remain the same.

We've put two pie charts on the notice board which shows at a glance where our money comes from, and where it is spent. The charts cover October '25 to August '26.

INCOME

As we said last year, our u3a income comes solely from gift aid, our annual membership fees, Group fees to cover room hire costs, and gifts or donations. In the year October to August our income has been £7,275.80 with an expenditure of £6,705.76.

Gift Aid
Our Gift Aid is an important source of funding. We get 25p back for every £1 of membership fee if the gift aid form is completed. Whilst not everyone qualifies for gift aid, if you pay tax then as long as the tax paid exceeds your total gift aid contribution you can complete the form, for us and any other charity you choose. This year we received £120 from HMRC. This is an increase on last year's £49, as we receive gift aid on the increased membership fee of £10.

Wooler u3a Annual Membership Fees
We decided to reduce our membership fees a few years ago to reduce our bank balance a little, which has had the desired effect. The Committee has reviewed the annual fee and it will remain £10 per year, as it was last year. This is still lower than in earlier years, but we feel that this will help us to maintain a healthy bank balance.

Group Fees
This income is the money each Group charges for attendance to cover room hire. So far this year we have received £5,668.35 in Group fees.

EXPENDITURE

Our biggest annual expenditure is room hire, followed by National u3a membership.

Room Hire
Room hire costs for the eleven months so far this year has been £5,264.50, which is covered by Group fees. Therefore we have a surplus of £403.85.

The room hire costs in the Cheviot Centre increased this year from £9.00 to £9.50 per hour, with the table tennis in the URC Hall remaining the same at £16 per session on a Tuesday and £20 on a Friday.

Most groups have increased the group fees to cover the higher cost.

This is still a very reasonable cost for facilities we are fortunate to have.

National u3a membership
Our second largest cost is our National u3a membership at £4 per person, a total of £568. In 2024/25 we paid the £4 from our £5 membership fee. With the membership fee for 2025/26 being £10, we retained £6 for Wooler u3a, where in previous years we kept just £1.

Kitchen and Refreshments
From October to March this year our costs for the kitchen cleaning, and supplies for refreshments were £224.56. Last year our costs for this were £382.80. In December Shona found she no longer had the time for managing the kitchen for us and we now do this for ourselves.

In February the Committee decided to standardise the arrangements for providing biscuits, coffee and tea, since some groups claimed for these items and some provided their own. Groups now provide their own refreshments, and we cover the costs for events such as the AGM.

Since these changes were introduced, our costs have fallen substantially, and we will save somewhere in the region of £300 per year.

Other Costs
Our photocopying costs this year have reduced to £80.05. It's still worth bearing in mind that we pay 15p per side for B&W and 55p for colour. Even the smallest element of colour will incur the higher cost.

Andy Middleton

Treasurer, Wooler u3a

GROUP LEADERS' ANNUAL REPORTS

ART APPRECIATION – report by David Bull

Bob Taylor has been leading the U3A Art Appreciation Group on the usual last Tuesday of the month for years. Now it's time for Bob to retire from this role. So I'm sure all of us would like to thank Bob for all his presentations and admin over the years and hope he continues to enjoy life. But it does mean we are looking for a new leader to our small group of regular attendees. I will present every other month so we are looking for someone to start a discussion five or six times a years and to collect the fees. It's not a difficult role so if you are interested please contact any committee member of Wooler u3a.

Over the last year we have had a number of presentations on a variety of different artists and styles. These included: Artists and Landscape in Shetland; Pre-Raphaelites; Victorian Water Colourists; Japanese Woodcut Prints. There were also discussions following films. Looking ahead we will be encouraging constructive criticism and discussion on up and coming topics which will include: 'The Glasgow Boys' in September and 'Art in Iceland and Errò' in October. In the New Year: 'Maggie Hambling, CBE, at 80 years old'; and "Reflections on 'A Visit to Tate Modern', including art from Ana Mendieta.

We are looking for more people to turn up, participate and perhaps suggest new artists or styles to discuss. Or just watch and listen. No previous experience necessary.

BOARD GAMES – Maggie Harker

The group has expanded to nine members and we have outgrown the library accommodation for the time being. (Much to the dismay of Jo and Cath who, on occasion, were able to join in the games.) New members welcome!

BRIDGE – Andy Middleton

The Bridge club continues to slowly grow. We meet on Friday afternoons and enjoy a relaxed and sociable bridge session. We cater for all levels and welcome new players. If anyone would like to learn to play, we do offer a few hours of one to one tuition to get you to a level where you could play in the Cheviot Centre and progress.

CARPET BOWLS – report by Barbara Rattcliff

We meet every Tuesday at 10.0a.m., at The Cheviot Centre, and play until 12 noon. We are a very friendly group and will be happy to see you there. We usually form two teams and it is a game of very friendly rivalry, we cheer any good shot whoever makes it, whether it is your team or the opposition. If you have never played Carpet Bowls before do not worry - we will be happy to have you and help you on your way.

EXERCISE GROUP – Pat Boyd

Numbers remained high, with a short waiting list throughout. The Group met weekly to maintain and improve mobility, strength, balance and co-ordination through gentle exercise with chair support as required. Music, small equipment and lots of laughter enhanced our efforts. In early 2026 the Wooler GP Practice Social Prescriber enquired about referring patients to the Group. Sadly, I had decided to retire and so we were not able to explore this potential source of new u3a members.

Leading the Group has been great fun. I very much hope a new Exercise Group will spring up to complement Table Tennis and Carpet Bowls. I would be very happy to discuss any ideas about the type of activities which would be popular; perhaps some form of dance, simple circuits or indoor ball games, and to contribute in any way I can.

Many, many thanks to all the members who supported the Group. Patricia Boyd

GEOLOGY – Peter Davies

The Group has continued to thrive with additional attendees from other u3as coming to listen to talks by Elizabeth Devon. These have been as wide ranging and as informative as ever. Elizabeth's subjects have included 'Snowball Earth: When we were really, really cold: an investigation into Ice Ages; 'Fungi'; 'When we were really, really hot: an investigation into two hyperthermal events on Earth'; and 'The work of James Hutton and Siccar Point'. Elizabeth has a remarkable knack of making subjects which appear intellectually intimidating accessible and enjoyable; the sign of a remarkably good teacher.

All are welcome to meetings which are held at 2-30pm on the first Thursday of the month.

HISTORY GROUP – Joan Thomas

History group has survived another year with member attendance averaging 14 per meeting. Subjects covered have been many and varied, from the life of Noel Coward to the history of hedges and including stories of archaeological digs, monasteries and the history of Ad Gefrin. Our speakers have all been excellent.

Members have also participated by doing their own research into subjects such as Battles of Northumberland and historical incidents coinciding with their own birthdays. Members' support is much appreciated and hopefully this will continue throughout the coming year.

OPERA AND BALLET – Veronica Gilbert

A small group of five to ten people continue to enjoy opera and ballet streamings each month on a large screen television. Operas range from favourites to lesser known works and ballets include both classical and contemporary. All are listed regularly on the u3a programme. We also enjoy a good discussion over tea and biscuits. All are welcome; but please check in with Veronica first to ensure there are enough seats. There is normally plenty of space and we haven't had to turn anyone away yet!

PAINTING DRAWING AND CRAFT - Joyce Robertson

The group was extended to Crafts last year and it was lovely because there were new members who joined. We have a regular attendance of eight or nine: knitting, needlework and even lino cutting as well as painting and drawing, so please, as I keep saying, if you can carry it please bring it along. We are a friendly bunch and love to see what's being made. You never know, there might be something you never thought about trying. We meet on the 4th Thursday of every month.

PHILOSOPHY FOR FUN – Maggie Harker

The group remains stable and we continue to ponder questions such as, What should be the goal of humanity? Or, Is it possible to live a normal life and not ever tell a lie? The discussions meander like a river in its final stages but diversions and eddies can be edifying!

QUIZ GROUP – Pat Brown

The group enjoyed puzzling over a wide variety of general knowledge categories, a picture round, and some terrible cartoon jokes to prevent us taking it too seriously.
Regular numbers increased this year, and we hope even more members will join in the fun this coming year, 2nd Wednesday of month, October - May.

READING FOR PLEASURE – Elaine Bales

Reading for Pleasure is a group of enthusiastic bookworms, who meet monthly to discuss a book chosen by a member. There are no rules about the choice of book, except that it must be available in paperback. Discussions are informal, and lively, and often lead away from the book itself onto wider issues. The group is full, so unfortunately we are unable to take any new members for now.

TABLE TENNIS – Veronica Gilbert

Table tennis continues to thrive twice a week, on Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings, with an enthusiastic and friendly bunch of players who are there for fun and enjoyment, plus a bit of exercise and hand/eye coordination. We have players of all abilities and normally play doubles so everyone can enjoy a good number of games each session. There is time to sit and chat and enjoy a cup of coffee too in this very sociable group. All are welcome to come along and give it a try, including complete beginners. We have bats available and plenty of players willing to help you get started.

WINE APPRECIATION – Ann Love

The Wine Appreciation group is in its 11th year and continues to be very popular. We now have 6 people on the waiting list. One group member presents the wines for the evening, on a rotational basis.
For more information please contact Ann on 07835 950069