Looe U3A. A Potted History

(Derived from the Archives (Mary Rees) and put together by Kay Kettle and Donald Tarling.

The following is in draft form. Help with identifying people (and spelling their names correctly!) would be appreciated.

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2. Preface

This is an abbreviated history based on the Looe & District U3A archives. These archives contain considerably more details of groups, committee members, etc.

U3A, one of the best things ever to come out of France - U3A came to UK in 1982. Before U3A, clubs for senior citizens were somewhere lonely old folk went for a chat, a cup of tea, and to be entertained, usually by the younger generation. Then came U3A with its vision of life-long learning, of sharing interests and knowledge, and suddenly retirement became something to look forward to, not to dread.

The first Université du Troisième Age was founded in Toulouse in 1972. It was based on committees of local retired people negotiating with a University for the use of their facilities and expertise, including the teaching time of university academics. An International Colloquium was held in Toulouse the following year and an international association of U3A (AIUTA) was set up.

U3A was first established in the U.K. in 1982, although not along such academic lines as in France and emphasising the abilities of local retirees. The first such local U3As were launched in Cambridge, Sutton Coldfield, Yeovil, Stevenage and Harpenden.

3. U3A to Looe 1991

U3A came to Looe in 1991 thanks to the foresight and determination of David Baker who, before retiring to Looe, had been involved in U3A in Colchester. An introductory meeting, Chaired by the then Mayor, Sid Gardner, was held on a wet and windy night in the coffee lounge at the Guildhall on January 16th 1991. "David's quiet sincerity and belief in the concept soon transmitted itself to those present" (Cornish Times). The first formal meeting of Looe and District U3A was at the Portbyhan Hotel on January 29th 1991 with around 28 members with David Baker as the first Chairman, Terry Walsh as Treasurer and Carol Harriott, as Secretary. The early meetings were at various venues, the Portbyhan Hotel, Nomansland and even "Hillcrest". Elsie Graham took over as Chairman when David became ill; a position she was to hold for 5 years.
Key to photograph: 1 Pat Richardson. 2 Margaret Elliott. 3 Pim Wiliams. 4 Ann Spooner. 5 Wyn Milner. 6 Bill Wren. 7 Marjorie ? 8 Terry Walsh 9 Betty Haywood ? 10 Jason Haywood? 11 ? 12 Eileen Annereaux 13 Audrey Allen. 14 Mary Shore. 15 Colin Shore. 16 ?. 17 Iris Baker. 18 ?. 19 Colin Tansley. 20 ?. 21 ?. 22 ?. 23 Pam Greenwood. 24 Jeanne Oliver. 25 David Baker. 26 Jose Kelley. 27 Moreen Goldsworthy. 28 Louise Amslake. 29 Barbara Elson. Can you assist with filling any gaps?

4. 1991
By May of 1991, membership has reached 80; the Mayor and Mayoress Sid and Margaret Gardner were granted honorary membership in recognition of Sid’s support in bringing U3A to Looe.

5. 1992
The first Newsletter (edited by Anne Spooner for the first 8 years) was priced at 10p. By then there were ten groups ranging from Yoga to German, and Bridge to Meteorology. The first annual meeting (January 20th 1992) saw David’s stalwart work being recognised by granting him, and his wife Iris, Honorary Membership. The annual subscription was £2 plus "Tea and monthly meetings" at 50p per person ".

Figure 2 The First Anniversary. Left to right: Elsie Graham, Douglas Tamblin, Pam Greenwood, Ann Hessenford, Colin Shore. Mary Aves, Bill Wren

Figure 3 The first Walking Group. Left to right: Mary Shore (nee Eliot), Eileen Annereaux, kneeling?, Moreen Goldsworthy, Jason Haywood?, Betty Haywood, Jeannie Oliver, Colin Shore, Ann Croker, Barbara Elson, ?, Sid Gardner
Figure 4. The first French Group. Left to right: Mary Shore, Joy Tamblin, David Baker, Louise Amslake, Muriel Adams, Ida Clark

Figure 5. Scottish Dancing (not U3A - but many U3A members). Left to right: Jeannie Oliver, Audrey Allen, Vashti Trudeau, Moreen Goldsworthy
6. 1993
Membership had topped 100 and meetings became established at 10.00am on the second Wednesday of the month at St Martin's Church Hall, Looe. By now there were 17 group activities, with new groups ranging from Garden Gossip to Calligraphy. Subscriptions had increased to £4 but the newsletter was free and there was no longer a charge for meetings or tea.

7. 1994
Members took part in "The World's Biggest Coffee Morning" serving 170 cups of coffee and raising £340 for the McMillan Appeal. A Boules group was started by David Baker when a new boules piste was established at Hannafore in readiness for a visit by a group of French senior citizens from Quiberon (twinned with Looe).

8. 1995
In 1995 Elsie Graham resigned and a special tribute was paid to her, "unstinting work dedicated to building the U3A over the years". Subscriptions rose to £5. A 50p per head charge was also introduced for group meetings to cover the expenses of Group Leaders.

The ‘Still Useful Group’ was founded under the joint Chairmanship of David Baker and David Proffit - its aim, to encourage the entertainment of the Looe and District U3A by its own members - something they still do to the present day. Their first performance was at the 1995 Christmas party. There were now 23 groups and membership had grown substantially. As the venue, St Martin's Hall,
was limited to 100 (mainly for insurance purposes) it was decided that membership should be limited to 150 and so the first waiting list was introduced.

Figure 7. Honorary Membership presented to Elsie Graham. Certificate created by Mary Woollard and presented by Griff Jones (Chairman) with Deirdre Croker (Sec.)

Figure 8. One of the excellent "faith" lunches (Members supply the ‘afters’!). Penny Orford & Norma Edmondson
June saw U3A again involved in Looe Buccaneer Week with the Still Useful Group presenting a commemoration and Elizabethan Variety Show ‘Meet Sir Francis Drake’ in the Guildhall. At Christmas the Still Useful Group, now led By David Proffit, with his wife Christine in charge of costumes, produced their first pantomime ‘Cinderwelly’.

Figure 9. The Pedal Club. Sheila Haskin, Fiona ?, Griff Jones, Audrey Allan, Cecil ?, Pam Smithy, Joseph Ambrosoni, David Baker

Figure 10. ‘Cinderwelly’. by the Still Useful Group. Organised by David & Christine Proffit
10. **1997/8 - Griff Jones - Chairman - and the birth of Looe Valley U3A**

The number of groups had grown to 27 and a new membership ceiling of 180 had been reached and the waiting list reached 40. It was obvious that drastic action was needed, so, in June that year, Looe Valley U3A was launched with 41 members and Freda Murray in the Chair. That year also saw U3A enter Looe Carnival for the first time and take the first of many prizes with their Edwardian Street Scene, thanks to the wardrobe skills of Christine Proffit. In September the Still Useful Group staged a play reading of Dylan Thomas's Under Milkwood and in December produced yet another show written and directed by Christine and David Proffit ‘Poor but Honest’.

11. **1998/9 Peter Kendrick - Chairman**

January 1998 saw both Looe U3A Groups combined for a dinner at the Hannafore Point Hotel. In July members took the biscuit with their entry ‘Teatime Assortment’ winning first prize and the cup at Looe Carnival thanks to the ingenuity of Eileen Richmond and David Proffit.

12. **1999/2000 Beth Crossland Taylor - Chairman**

Looe and District U3A became affiliated to the National Federation following the disbanding of the Cornish Federation.

13. **2000/2001 Kay Kettle - Chairman**

To celebrate the Millennium the two Looe U3A's formed a Joint Social Committee to organize an Old Time Musical Hall at Looe Bay Holiday Camp with over 100 members and guests entering into the spirit of the occasion by wearing Victorian costume. That year also saw the two groups combine for a Quiz Night - to become an annual event, and a Race Evening. Looe and District U3A marked the millennium with a stone seat – although the weather prevented installation until the summer of 2001. That year the Summer Lunch was attended by over 100 members and once again SUG came up trumps at the Christmas lunch with an hilarious sketch ‘Speeches and Cream’ produced by Deirdre Croker.
Figure 11. Some of the ‘Victorians’. Penny Orford, Margret Bale, Irene Sculthorpe, Sybil Marshall, Eve Lefley, Rosemary Leach, Moreen Goldsworthy

Figure 12. More ‘Victorians’ Peter King & friend
Figure 13. The U3A Millenium seat on Wooldown. The "erectors" (with others) Peter King and Derek Kettle But not enough room for even a few of the U3A in 2001!!!

14. **2001/2 - Ann Kendrick - Chairman**

January 2001 saw the 10th anniversary with a dinner at the Hannafore Point Hotel attended by 11 founder members including, including David Baker and by 80 current members with guests from Looe Valley U3A and the U3A of Plymouth. Looe and District U3A take both first prize and cup for best entry in Looe Carnival with their entry ‘The Red Barrows’ the inspiration of Derek Steeden, while SUG performed ‘Little Red Whittington’ at the Christmas lunch.
Figure 14. The 10th Anniversary with some of the original members. Colin & Mary Shore, ?, Audrey Allen, Iris & David Baker, Sybil Marshall, Ruby Allicker, Moreen Goldsworthy, Margaret & Sid Gardner

15. **2002/3 Peter King - Chairman**
Subscriptions rose to £7.50. The Jubilee Street Party, organized by the Joint Social Committee at Looe Bay Holiday Camp was a roaring success bringing back memories of the street parties of the 50.’s. Christmas saw SUG proving that they too could produce a ‘cats’ musical ‘Cats Follies’, at the Christmas lunch.

Figure 15. Some of the Jubilee Party.
16. **2003/4 Iris Ward - Chairman**
Looe and District U3A made front page of the U3A News when they took first prize and cup for best entry with their spectacular 30ft long ‘Puff the Cornish Dragon’ created and constructed by Derek Steeden. SUG again provided the entertainment at the Christmas Lunch with a Christmas Anthology - a collection of verse, carols and drama again produced by Deidre Croker.

17. **2004/5 Don Tarling - Chairman**
This year included a Caribbean Evening complete with steel band organized by the joint committee and again attended by over 100 members. It was one of three events organized by the Joint Committee the others being the joint Quiz Night and a race evening. Looe and District again took first prize at Looe Carnival, this time with ‘Octo Plus’; a giant octopus designed by Eileen Richmond and Christine Proffit. The September meeting saw ladies in large hats, men in boaters, side-shows stalls, not forgetting the refreshment tent, as members held a garden party in glorious weather in the grounds of St Martin’s Church Hall. The Christmas lunch saw SUG again in good form when they presented ‘Cinders’ Sisters’ their own version of Cinderella, set in a castle in Looe.

18. **2005/6 Eileen Richmond - Chairman**
Subscriptions rose to £8.50. October saw Looe and District and Looe Valley join for a Barn Dance organized by the Joint Social Committee at Looe Bay Holiday Park. SUG again entertained members at the Christmas lunch held for the first time at Looe Bay Holiday Park, with an Old Tyme Musical Hall - a real Edwardian Christmas.

Figure 16. Boules is still thriving and is now every Friday afternoon during the summer. Jim Ward, Joseph Ambrosoni, ‘Polly’ Kettle, David Baker & Kay Kettle, Queenie Shearman
19. 2006/7 Anna Bourchier - Chairman
The 15th anniversary dinner was held at the Old Sail Loft. The total membership of both Looe U3A groups was now over 250. Looe and District took first prize and the cup for best walking group at Looe Carnival with their entry ‘Transport of Delights’ thanks to the genius of Eileen Richmond and Christine Proffit, supported by their chief constructor, Nic Hobbs.

After editing the Newsletter for five years, Dawn Channings stepped down in 2006 and Eileen Richmond and Kay Kettle stepped into the breach introducing a new format and producing their first newsletter in September that year.

20. 2007/8 Jim Ward - Chairman
U3A UK celebrated its 25th anniversary. The wide diversity of the interests of members of Looe and District U3A were on display at a Hobbies and Activities morning at the August meeting, which revealed just how much talent there is within U3A.

21. 2008/9 Iris Ward - Chairman
Getting 2008 off to a happy start, SUG brought London to Looe, in song verse and sketch set amid a realistic London scene painted by Daphne Dann and Eileen Richmond. The annual dinner was held at Hannafore Point Hotel. The Carnival 1st prize again went to Looe & District, aided by Looe Valley, with their balloons – ‘Up and Away with U3A’.

22. 2009/10 Rosemary Robinson - Chairman
The year was heralded in by Iris Ward’s production of ‘Cornish Sinbad’ - a story of ‘rags to riches’ set in a variety of Cornish venues. This was performed by the newly formed TATs (Third Age Thespians) group - formerly the Still Useful Group. The annual dinner was held at Looe Golf Club in very wintery conditions and was attended by 46 members. Subscriptions rose to £11.00 per annum. The Quiz Night (a joint effort by both Looe groups) had a record attendance and resulted in the morning group winning the trophy.

The Midsummer BBQ held on the Wooldown was delightful. After the previous two years of heavy rain which resulted in it being cancelled, this year the weather was hot with clear blue skies.
Our Summer lunch was very successful this year despite the weather, but an excellent tombola and 'horse-racing' in the marquee provided the entertainment prior to lunch, the excellent food being produced by our new Gorgeous Grub Group.

The carnival entry this year was 'Re-cycled YoUth3A' and featured several of our members representing cans, loo rolls, bottles, newspapers, re-cycling centres which resulted in a second prize being awarded in our section.
For the second year running, and our thanks to Peter Williams on both occasions, the morning group beat its great rivals, the Looe Valley Group and won the Inter-club Skittles event.

Our new Logo, shown below, was designed by Betty Philp and was selected from a number of suggestions and designs. Its simplicity in portraying the essence of Looe was a key factor in the committee’s final choice.

Our Christmas lunch, held in December was attended by a bumper number of members, - 96 in all, and we were entertained one again by the TATs group performing 'Starstruck', a tribute to stars of yesteryear.

23. 2010/11 Dot Dunning - Chairman
This being the 20th anniversary year of the Looe & District U3A, it was decided to celebrate it in style throughout the year with a Twenties theme for many of our social events.
During February and March we were given a fantastic opportunity, sponsored by the 'Hall for Cornwall', to take part in a playwriting course, 'Anyone Can Write'. This was led by a professional playwright over a period of six weeks, and ten intrepid pens put their minds and pens to paper and each produced an individual play lasting ten minutes (much to the surprise of themselves!). This led to an enjoyable evening of our plays being read by four professional actors with a Director and was attended by approximately 35 members from both groups.

The culmination of this event was with one of our plays, 'Hell Hath No Fury', written by Rosemary Robinson, being performed on stage at the Hall for Cornwall. What an accolade. Well done Rosemary!

May - 2010 saw our annual Quiz Night (or our Fish & Chip evening as some prefer to call it) Approximately 65 people attended this very popular event and after a hard fought battle, the shield was retained for the second year running by the morning group. Congratulations to the winning team 'The Usual Suspects' pictured below.

Figure 20. The Usual Suspects. From left to right: Alan & Dot Dunning, Sue Harrison, Harry Barnett, Rosemary Robinson & Ann & Chris McArdle
The annual BBQ held on the Wooldown on 24th June started with hot and sunny weather, but dark clouds soon threatened. However, the weather held, the food was cooked to perfection and our spirits were uplifted by the presence of Harry Barnett’s recently formed ukulele band who played and sang their way into the afternoon. A good time was had by all.

July brought the Third Age Thespians (TATs) performance of ‘At the Hotel Sable D’Or’ to both groups. Written and directed by Iris Ward, it was the first of our Twenties themed events. A story of love and romance for the young and not-so-young, set in a Hotel in France in the 1920’s. A light-hearted and humorous production, it featured many popular songs from musicals such as ‘The Boyfriend’ and ‘Salad Days’ and was received very well at both performances with the audiences joining in with The Charleston. Another success for Iris for the second year running.

Figure 21. The ‘Girls’: From left to right: Dot Dunning, Jackie Fletcher, Rosemary Robinson with Rosemary’s ‘suitor’ Bill Hutchison.
Yet another success was attained at the Looe annual Carnival, held on the 31st July. Our joint entry 'Celestial Bodies' won us First Prize in our section. Well done to all who were involved and put so much work into the costumes.
Figure 23. Our 'Celestial Bodies', from left to right - Mercury and Uranus, Jupiter, Pluto, Mars, Sun, Earth, Moon, Neptune & Venus

The Looe Piccy Tree made it first outing in the Looe Carnival on 31st July 2010. Three of the Looe & District U3A were involved in the workshops to create the colourful creation - our Logo was proudly displayed.
Figure 24. Looe Piccy tree 2010

Figure 25. Looe & District U3A Logo
Our Summer Lunch on 11th August, 2010 was given a 1920’s Garden Party Theme as part of our 20’s season to commemorate our 20th anniversary year. After the business meeting, the founder of the Looe & District U3A - David Baker, was joined by the current Chairman - Dot Dunning and four other founder members in unveiling a commemoration plaque placed in the foyer of St. Martins
Community Hall. The commemoration plaque was unveiled by David Baker - founder of the Looe & District U3A in January 1991. He was joined by four other founder members.

Figure 27. Founder Members. From left to right Moreen Goldsworthy, Pam Greenwood, David Baker, Sybil Marshall and Ruby Alliker

Figure 28. Chairmen Past & Present: Dot Dunning & David Baker
A light hearted garden party theme, with many of the members in appropriate dress followed with outdoor activities and a sumptuous lunch which has been prepared by our Gorgeous Grub Group

Figure 29. Horse Racing

Figure 30. Much fun being had by our 1920's Belles
Skittles Evening - 2nd October, 2010: The Looe Valley U3A who, after a hard-fought battle, re-gained the trophy after a two year wait. The Looe and District members hung on by their finger nails, but to no avail. They had to concede that the best team won!

Joint U3A Committee Lunch - 22nd October, 2010: In the interest of bringing our groups towards working more closely together, Steve Smith (Chairman Looe Valley) & Dot Dunning (Chairman Looe & District) arranged a joint lunch at the Looe Golf Club. It was a very sociable occasion, well attended, and the committees agreed to pool resources such as our sound equipment and projector and work more closely together on our Website and Social Events. Everyone enjoyed the lunch and resolved to repeat this on a regular basis.
What a Roaring Success! To Celebrate our 20 years of the U3A in Looe, we held a joint 1920’s Jazz Extravaganza on 12th November 2010 at Looe Bay Holiday Park
Flappers flapped and Boas moulting as everyone joined in the frenzy of the 'Charleston' and other dances of the era. Dez Bacon and his Red Hot Syncopators' music raised everyone to their feet - just no room on the dancefloor! Sheila's School of Dance troupe entertained with the 'Charleston' and 'All that Jazz' from 'Chicago'. Gangsters and 'Molls' were in abundance - even the MC looked very 'shady'. What was in that violin case?
Figure 33. And the band played on & on!!

Fantastic.

Figure 34. A Trio of 'Flappers'
Figure 35. ‘And all that Jazz’ Sheila’s School of Dance Troupe

Sketches by Daphne Dan capture the essence of the evening
On the 28th January 2011, a Gala dinner was held at the Hannafore Point Hotel to celebrate 20 years of the U3A in Looe.
The guests of honour were the Mayor of Looe, Cllr Jimmy Dingle and his wife Sue Dingle and the event was also attended by David Baker, founder of the Looe U3A and Ruby Alliker one of the founder members.

The Members who attended were treated to an extremely pleasant evening, a lovely meal, extravagant raffle prizes and were entertained throughout the meal by Keith Lockyer. Keith was later joined by his wife Judith and we sang and danced the evening away.
The Mayor gave recognition to the huge contribution the U3A makes to the community and a toast was raised to the next 20 years being as successful as the last.

Figure 40. From left to right: Dot Dunning Chairman 2010/2011, David Baker, founder of U3A in Looe, Sue Dingle, Cllr. Jimmy Dingle - Mayor, and Ruby Alliker, founder member.

24. 2011/2012 - Karin Masson - Chairman

Joint U3A Trip to London: In March 2011, 37 members of Looe U3A went on a 3-day visit to London. The weather was glorious. Our first stop was at Cribbs Causeway where we had a good lunch at the Carvery Co.
On to the London Eye where even those who were apprehensive of heights had a great and unforgettable experience. We then spent a couple of hours in Covent Garden before driving to our Hotel near Heathrow Airport. Up early the next morning to have a tour of the Houses of Parliament, another great experience as both groups had superb guides who made our tour most memorable. Sheryll Murray met us in Westminster Hall to welcome us. So sad she had to face such devastating news about her husband the following day!

Figure 42. Lyceum Theatre
The afternoon was spent in Knightsbridge where some of us indulged in tasting some of the exotic foods in Harrods or Harvey Nichols. Picked up at 4 pm we were taken back to Covent Garden where most of us had an evening meal before making our way to the Theatres. Half the group saw The Lion King and the others Love Never Dies. We returned to our hotel just before Midnight.

![Figure 43. Stop off in Bath](image)

Thursday, after breakfast we started our return journey. After a 3 - hour stop in Bath, we finally returned to Looe just before 7pm. We can honestly say that everybody had a brilliant time. We must also mention our superb driver ‘Bunny’ who worked beyond his calling and made our stay even more enjoyable.

**Greyhound Racing Evening - 11th March, 2011:** As a change from horseracing, a joint greyhound racing evening was arranged by the Looe Valley Group. What fun we had deciding on the best bets - was it all in a name or did previous form count?

No-one lost or gained a fortune - not even the 'bookies', but it was a splendid evening with a fish and chip supper and bar.
The Third Age Thespians (TATs) Production of 'Tales from the Island': The April meeting featured 'Tales from the Island' a light-hearted look at the history of St. George's Island (Looe Island) Written & Directed by Rosemary Robinson and Carole Day, the production featured monks, pirates, smugglers, World War II and the Atkins sisters. Even the presence of the Island ghost was explored and the Tales were relayed via a Mermaid who had witnessed all!!
Several performances were held. Two for the U3A groups, and some special performances were given to the residents of Tregertha Residential Home, Hillcrest and the Echo Centre.
May 6th, Fish & Chip Supper & Quiz Night: On May 6th, 2011 the joint annual Fish & Chip Supper & Quiz Night took place at St. Martin's Community Hall. The air was tense as the Looe Valley Group resolved to win back the trophy from the Looe & District group who won it last year.

Figure 45. 'Zelia's Heroes' - Winners of the Shield
It wasn’t easy and in the words of Zelia Crockett - "’Zelia’s Heroes’, Sandra, Derek, Enid, Pat, Bernard, Jennifer and Zelia, had never been thrown together before and naming our team seemed difficult enough. Then the quiz started. No one was an ardent royalist, however, we made a reasonable guess at the photo sheet. At half time we were in 5th place. The next half, we found easier and at the end we were only two points adrift. On the final question we risked all and gained 7 points which left us in joint 1st position. The tie question was on golf. If we had got the previous question on golf correct, we would have been outright winners! Our hearts sank when the question master said that the two answers were a century apart. WE WON - we were only 20 years adrift. What a good night out!!"