



The Thrapston & District U3A website is [www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk](http://www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk)

Contents	
<b>Special Notice</b>	1
From the Editor	1
Forthcoming Thrapston & District Events	2
Group Leaders' Reports	2
Theatre Trips and Outings	3
Visit to the Houses of Parliament – 3 December 2013	4
Group Leaders' Reports continued	5
Car sharing and other costs	5
Your U3A committee	5

**Special Notice**  
**20 December Meeting**

**Come along to our special December meeting:**

- Come early at 10.00 am
- free entry
- free mulled wine
- mince pies
- special displays by members
- free raffle for a Christmas hamper

**Bring a guest**, who may be inspired to join you in your U3A activities.  
Have fun and join in the Seasonal Spirit.

A bicycle can't stand alone ... it is two tired.



**The Committee of the Thrapston & District U3A wish all and every member a very merry and enjoyable Christmas or Winterfest and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.**



**From the Editor**

Firstly, my apologies for having sent the newsletter out last month in clear and not as a blind-copy. I realised my error as soon as I had pressed the button.

I have had a number of favourable comments about my first edition of the newsletter and one, 'I read a newsletter for news not inane old jokes. What has happened to the news from the groups?' If you do not like old inane jokes please skip them and then you won't be bothered. You will recognise them by the different font. However, I digress - thank you to all who commented on the newsletter.

Continued on page 4

## Forthcoming Thrapston & District U3A Events

2013

**20 December Christmas Programme.** Doors will open from 10.00 am (for mulled wine and mince pies) and viewing of displays by the various activity groups. The meeting proper will commence at 10.30 am and will consist of representatives of the various groups expanding upon and explaining their displays. We look forward to some interesting and entertaining displays, including a reading by the Creative Writing Group of extracts from their soon to be published book of short stories.

2014

### Date

3 January	Midnight. Deadline for copy for the newsletter to be with the editor.
17 January	Mike Leonard. Sadistic Safari
25 January	Priscilla Queen of the Desert
21 February	Martin Towsy. Role of the Garden Estates Manager at Woburn.
21 March	Dr Miles Ellis. The real Burma; an Englishman's View.
18 April	Glyn James. A Year in Sweden
23 April	Fiddler on the Roof at the Royal and Derngate at 2.30 pm
16 May	AGM
9 July	Singin' in the Rain

A computer programmer's wife tells him, 'Run to the store and pick up a loaf of bread. If they have eggs get a dozen.' He comes home with twelve loaves of bread.

Never trust an atom. They make up everything.

## Group Leaders' Reports December 2013

I'm really looking forward to the **December meeting** as we have virtually all our leaders and some members showcasing their groups. We have readings from Creative Writing, a Tai Chi demonstration, a mini French play and watch out for the 17<sup>th</sup> Century soldier! Many other groups are represented by displays and presentations.

There will as usual be opportunities to sign up for groups and I'm particularly pleased to tell you that three new groups will be launched in the New Year. Wednesday, 8 January will see the first **Country Dancing** Group starting at 2pm and finishing at 3.30pm. It will be fortnightly, hopefully in St James's Hall and George will confirm the arrangements and take names at the showcase meeting on 20 December. All dances will be walked through and fully explained, it will be light-hearted and fun and partners are not needed. George's email is [ghearnden@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:ghearnden@tiscali.co.uk), phone number 01933 622827 if you'd like to put your name down early.

Irene plans to have the first **Ten-Pin Bowling** game(s) on Friday 10 January. She already has 17 people on the list and asks that you confirm your place by the 8 January so that she can book the lanes. More members very welcome, please speak to her at the meeting or ring 732948. Irene also plans to launch Board Games in January and has seven members signed up with space for more. It will be on an informal basis rather than a set day and she will let you know of the first date.

I'm also working on launching a **Photography** group later in January and am still investigating a group leader but will let you know in the January newsletter. Please contact me if you are interested and haven't as yet put your name down [glynishillo6@aol.com](mailto:glynishillo6@aol.com)

Finally, the **Theatre and Outings Group** had a truly wonderful day at the Houses of Parliament when forty members met our MP Andy Sawford. Please read the report in this newsletter. It was all organised by one of the three group leaders, **Margaret Mace**, who has announced that she will be leaving us to move away in the New Year. I'd like to say a personal and resounding **thank you** to Margaret; I've been to a number of outings and they've all been arranged with precision and thoughtfulness and as a result we've had some wonderful times. I wish her every happiness in her new home.

Continued on page 5

## Theatre Trips and Outings

Transport will usually be provided and pick-up and drop-off outside the Thrapston Co-op. The cost of each coach will include the driver's tip. Once the theatres and coaches have been paid for, money paid cannot be refunded and members should try and find a replacement. If places are available, members may bring a guest at an extra cost of £1. Payment may be made by cash or cheque payable to Thrapston & District U3A.

On 13 November a small group of members went to the Derngate Theatre in Northampton to see **The Buddy Holly Story**. What a wonderful and enjoyable afternoon - we left feeling good and thank Pauline for organising this trip.

**Priscilla Queen of the Desert - Saturday 25 January 2014 - matinee.** There was an unfortunate typing error in the report last month **the cost of the coach is £11.00** and is payable by the December meeting. The coach will leave from the Co-op at 11.00 am on the 25 January giving time in Milton Keynes for shopping or lunch.

**Fiddler on the Roof at the Royal and Derngate on the 23rd April for the 2.30 performance.** 'From the award-winning producers of *The King And I* and *High Society* comes a new production of one of the world's favourite musicals. Directed and choreographed by **Craig Revel Horwood**, the nation's favourite *Strictly Come Dancing* judge and master of the musical stage. **Fiddler On The Roof** stars the celebrated and acclaimed actor, director and writer, **Paul Michael Glaser** (Starsky in the iconic '70s TV series *Starsky & Hutch*) in the lead role of Tevye.

Tevye, the local milkman in his village of Anatevka, has always stuck by his traditions, but suddenly his headstrong daughters make the controversial choice to marry for love rather than accept whatever Yente, the village matchmaker, decides. Tevye loves his daughters but has to convince his wife, as well as all the villagers, that their decisions are actually falling in with tradition. It is not an easy task, but if anyone can do it, the wily Tevye can. Filled to the brim with classic songs such as *If I Were A Rich Man*, *Matchmaker Matchmaker*, *Sunrise Sunset* and *To Life*, *Fiddler On The Roof* was the longest running production on Broadway for over 13 years and when you join Tevye, his family and friends, you will understand why'.

The price will be approximately £34 to include ticket price, coach fare and tip for the driver and I will be at the meeting to take the names of anyone interested.

**Singin' in the Rain - Wednesday 9 July 2014. - Matinee.** This show at Milton Keynes Theatre is a long way off, but by reserving early tickets for groups we have got good seats at a good price of £26, **but** they will only hold them until 20 January 2014 - hence the early notice. Seats may be reserved these by paying a deposit of the seat price at the December or January meetings, or by telephoning me. The coach price will be notified later.

We are thinking about outings for next year and some suggestions will be on our table at the December meeting. Please indicate your interest. There is also the possibility of short (adult only) break at a Warners Hotel.

Towards the end of 2012 three of us (Margaret, Pauline and I) offered to organise theatre visits and days out. Margaret is now moving away from Thrapston, and I am sure you will express with me our appreciation for the work and effort she has put into the events she has arranged, and wish her well in her new home in Yorkshire.

Any questions phone **Brenda** on **01832 730225**.

The only reason they say, 'women and children first' is to test the strength of the lifeboats ~ Jean Kerr

I've been married to a communist and a fascist, and neither would take out the garbage ~ Zsa Zsa Gabor

You know you're a redneck if your home has wheels and your car doesn't ~ Jeff Foxworthy

When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife ~ Prince Philip

Wood burns faster when you have to cut and chop it yourself ~ Harrison Ford



**From the Editor** - continued from page 1.

Hopefully the gremlin that reduced the news and group reports in the last issue has now been resolved. Your contributions are all welcome on any subject, and I will reproduce those suitable and likely of interest to others.

Insofar as news from the groups is concerned - I rely upon Group Leaders and other members to supply me with news. If there is no news sent to me, I cannot include it. So, please, Group Leaders, let Glyn or me have reports of your doings and if possible, include photographs. I will publish all reports, and if the photographs are of sufficiently good quality I will also include those. Please see my note on page 5 about photographs. In the meantime I will cheerfully continue editing your newsletter for as long as the members wish, and remain a determinedly **happy** old git, merrily repeating inane old jokes, such as ...

To write with a broken pencil is ... pointless

### Visit to the Houses of Parliament – 3 December 2013

We all had a wonderful day, and I am pleased that everyone arrived early and we got away on time, thank you.

We were met by Rob Dale, who is Andy Sawford's researcher, before Andy welcomed us. We split into



two groups and our guides gave us a conducted tour of about 70 minutes. We were very impressed, especially the State Room, which had so much gold, and the guides were quite amusing. After the guided tour, Andy met us and took us onto the terrace where he pointed out a few landmarks. Rob took a group photograph and Pauline some snapshots. Andy took us into a room and told us some of the things he was looking into, we were able to ask questions and he gave his thoughts on

them. He seemed to be a very nice person and anxious to help in many ways with things where we have problems.

We had a lunch break and wandered about the House a bit, after which we went into the Strangers Gallery to watch a debate about cyber-bullying, something we hear a lot about. In this case, the MPs were quite long winded and there was a lot of repetition. Eventually we left, as it was almost time to come home. Rob had told us that we were the largest group they had had for the tour. Andy also complemented us on



having such a large group after only starting a year ago. To end our day, our driver took us round the London lights, which were lovely - quite different from previous years.

We arrived back at Thrapston tired but very happy. Thank you everyone for helping to make it a super day out. Happy Christmas and all the best for 2014.

**Margaret**

### Photographs

I welcome photographs of any activity or event which may be of interest to our readers, but, (there's always a but isn't there?) please take the photograph on a camera of reasonable quality so that there is sufficient definition in the picture for reproduction. A camera that is part of a mobile phone is rarely of a sufficiently high enough quality to provide photographs worthy of reproduction. If you can only supply prints of photographs, let me have, them as I can copy them for the newsletter and return the original to the supplier.

Many thanks, Parry

### Group Leaders reports, continued from page 2:

There was a **Computer Group** session was on Friday 6 December. In **January** the sessions will be on the second and fourth Fridays of the month, so that the January dates will be 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. Hope this suits everyone, and it means they are spread more evenly throughout the month.

John McGill [mcgill.john@btinternet.com](mailto:mcgill.john@btinternet.com) 01832 737995

### Tai Chi Group.

Due to popular demand we have now filled all the space we have in the present location. If you are interested in joining us please contact me as we are keeping a waiting list and hope to be able to take on new members in the New Year.

Linda [linannvic2000@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:linannvic2000@yahoo.co.uk) or 01933 380244

### Walk Group 2

We have come to the end of the walks for this year. These take place on the last Thursday of the month and are usually between 6 and 8 miles long. We have about 12 members at present, some of whom walk regularly and some who walk occasionally and all walkers are welcome, providing they can cope with the mileage. If there is a coffee shop en-route then we often stop off for a short break or alternatively we call in at a pub at the end of the walk. We are very happy to stop and take in the scenery and anything that is of interest to a member. I am sorting out a provisional programme, starting at the end of January, and if you would like any further information I will be at the December meeting.

Pauline **Dennison**

### Cycle Group

The first Cycle ride in the newly formed group is on Thursday 19 December. Please contact Rachel for further information: [rachelk@uwclub.net](mailto:rachelk@uwclub.net) 01832 734974

Glyn Hill, Group Co-ordinator

### Car Sharing and Other Costs

A number of groups use car-sharing for visits and I've been asked about sharing costs. Our U3A mileage payment is 40 p per mile and the committee have recommended that the mileage total is calculated and then each passenger pays their share to the driver. In addition, when a host member provides coffee and biscuits we recommend that each member pays 30p to the host. These are guides and as such are not written in stone, so if you already have a system that works, please continue.

*The best cure for sea sickness, is to sit under a tree ~ Spike Milligan*

### Your U3A Committee

Chair	Glyn James	Vice-Chair	Glyn Hill
Treasurer	Bryan Elliott	Secretary	Michelle Owen
Group Coordinator	Glyn Hill	Membership Secretary	Maddie Godden
Publicity	Rachel Thompson	Speaker Seeker	Richard Swindall
Website	Neil Busby	Editor	Parry Jones

**This newsletter** is published on behalf of the committee of the Thrapston & District U3A. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, or of the committee of the Thrapston & District U3A or of the U3A Trust.

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## Walking the Zambezi

When I announced my intention of walking the length of the Zambezi River, my family – accustomed perhaps to my occasional eccentricities – gave a collective shrug and let me get on with it. Others were not so tolerant. ‘You are too old,’ they carped. ‘You will have a heart attack – a stroke; we’ll never find your body.’

At 67, I suppose I was too old, but after a lifetime of wandering in Africa, I felt I had the experience to succeed where a younger person would not. As for the heart attack etc, I could suffer those while mowing my lawn in darkest Gloucestershire and I didn’t care whether my body was found or not. So I ignored the comments and got on with my preparations. Not that these were anything more than getting myself vaguely fit and investing in a few items of kit, before heading for Zambia. For once in my life I had sponsorship and my walk was officially entitled the Zambezi Cowbell Trek 2012 – Cowbell being a Zambian firm run by former colleague, Andy Taylor.

Food was my biggest problem. My sponsors promised to resupply me at three points along the way, but I had to carry enough to keep me going for weeks on end. When I walked away from the Zambezi source near Mwinilunga in April 2012, my pack weighed a cool 30 kilograms. With 3000 plus kilometres ahead of me, that was dauntingly heavy.

Nevertheless, I was committed and for the next 184 days, I trudged through some of the wildest and most fascinating countryside in the world. From the vast, wet, Luena flood plains to the steep-sided gorges below Victoria Falls, I plodded on - weight dropping from my body at an alarming rate. I slept beneath the stars and enjoyed time spent with a variety of local people. From lordly Chiefs to drug smugglers living among the gorges, everyone was welcoming and enthusiastic about my journey. At various times, I was taken for Jesus Christ on his way through the wilderness, the ghost of explorers long gone and a Satanist on the hunt for body parts. On at least three occasions, I was asked to run for the post of Zambian President.

‘You know how we live here,’ was the rationale behind that particular request. ‘The politicians never visit us except to hand out T shirts and ask for our votes.’ Sounds like politicians everywhere, I suppose.

Villagers offered me meals of nshima (maize meal porridge to most of us) and fish, which supplemented my powdered diet and kept me going. At times, I fished for myself or ate deliciously from the bush, but I also sampled rat, vervet monkey, hippo, grasshoppers and antelope. None of it did me harm and merely made a welcome change from my daily diet of ‘health food.’

But for all the feeding, my weight continued to fall away and when I arrived at Siavonga beside the Kariba dam wall. I had lost nearly 30kg and was suffering from bloody heels, an assortment of bruises and teeth that rattled like rabid castanets in my mouth. For all that, I was pleased with myself, as I had covered 1839 kilometres and only had 1200 ahead of me. I had survived the flood plains and the rocky horror of the gorges and averaged 9 kilometres a day throughout. That surely wasn’t bad for a pensioner.

But I just could not continue in that state and when one of my beloved Courteney boots split across the top, I took it as a sign from above that it was time to take a break. In fact as I arrived in Siavonga, the first major storm of the year erupted over the town, with thunder, lightning and hammering rain. It lasted but a few moments and I took that as another heavenly message. Mind you, I wasn’t sure whether it meant ‘well done’ or ‘big wuss,’ but it didn’t seem to matter.

Having split my journey into two parts, I will now get myself and my kit together, learn Portuguese for the journey through Mozambique and write a book on the River People of Zambia. Over the Easter weekend of 2014, I shall be back in Siavonga for a three day ‘fun’ walk over 36 kilometres around the Kariba Gorge. I will be left beside the Zambezi at Tamarind Lodge and from there; I will be alone with this wonderful river once again.

The way ahead will be hard, but I will succeed and will finish at Chinde on the Mozambique coast shortly before my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. Then I will rest and take stock. Perhaps – and only perhaps – I will accept then that I really am too old for challenges such as walking the Mighty Zambezi.

David Lemon

The above tale is by a former colleague of mine in the BSA Police of Rhodesia.