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Welcome from the Chair



Well, the countdown has started. Thrapston Christmas Lights have been switched on and I think you will agree that they are very good. The Advent Calendars are now up and the first few doors open, or, in my case, the first few chocolates eaten!

It will not be long before our December meeting which sold out very quickly. The doors will open **at 9.45am** on the 15th so that we can make a prompt start at 10.00 am . We are looking forward to a wonderful 1960's morning, with a mix of entertainment, quiz, raffle and music. Having been told about some of the outfits that are planned, I cannot wait to see the fashion parade.

It is not long now before the festive season is upon us and regardless of how you celebrate, or what your plans are, I hope you all have a very enjoyable time .

On behalf of your Committee I would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a great New Year.

Sheila

December 2017



A Day in the Life of a TV Licence Enforcement Officer

by Mike Long

Mr Mike Long, who had worked as a TV Licence Enforcement Officer, began by reminding us that the purpose of his talk was to inform and entertain, not 'How to skip payment of the Licence Fee'!



When television broadcasts in the UK were resumed after a break due to the Second World War, it was decided to introduce a television licence fee to fund the service. When first introduced on 1st June 1946, the licence, covering the monochrome-only single-channel BBC television service, cost £2. At that time all TVs were Black and White and the fee was collected by the General Post Office.

The BBC started regular colour TV broadcasts in the summer of 1967. On 1st January 1968, a "colour supplement" of £5 was added to the existing £5 monochrome licence fee; the combined colour licence fee was therefore £10, the equivalent of £159.16 as of 2016. The current cost is £147.00 for colour TV and £49.50 for monochrome TV.



In 1991, the BBC assumed the role of TV Licensing Authority, with responsibility for the collection and enforcement of the licence fee. A few years later Mike, who was a Trainer working for the Post Office, was approached by the BBC to train the Enforcement Officers to be polite and diligent on the doorstep when trying to establish if the occupier had a TV. Mike had many stories of the visits made by Enforcement Officers to establish the non-existence of a TV in the house.

He entertained us with some of the excuses he had heard :

My 11-year-old son bought the TV during the night!

A pigeon fell down the chimney and broke the aerial!

I have a letter from the Queen making me exempt!

My mum told me to tell you she is not in!

The Enforcement Officers make around four million visits a year and there are 200,000 prosecutions, with 38 people jailed in the last year in the UK.

TV detector vans were introduced in 1952, but are now only used as a warning when an area campaign is in progress. Only 116 requests were made in 2016 for their use. As part of its enforcement regime, the BBC is authorised to carry out surveillance using powers defined by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (British Broadcasting Corporation) Order 2001.

When the officers are blitzing an area with blocks of flats, they start at the top and work their way down. On one such visit by Mike, the resident did not answer the door. When he rang the bell again and waited, he heard a muffled conversation inside the flat, followed by a crashing sound. The door was eventually opened, and he was invited in. The resident then admitted that he thought he would hide the TV but had tripped and the TV, which was only recently purchased, was destroyed. On this occasion, therefore, Mike had to admit that he could not prosecute, as with no working TV, no licence was required.

More amusing stories followed and we were surprised to learn that one offender, who received three visits in a year, invited Mike to his daughter's wedding, which he felt he should decline.

Who knew so many entertaining stories would come from a TV Licence Enforcement Officer?

Pauline Johnson

Calendar of Events 2017–18

2017

15 December **U3A Yuletide Event** - ticket holders only. Doors open at 9.45am for a prompt start at 10am

2018

11 January **First meeting of Stitchers Group** - see page 7

19 January **Branch Meeting** - Mr Philip Saxby — Cider Maker

1 February **Mama Mia, Milton Keynes** - see page 7

16 February **Branch Meeting** - Andy Smith

19 April **An Officer and a Gentleman** - Leicester, Curve Theatre (see page 6)

20 Sept **Warhorse** - Milton Keynes Theatre (see page 6)



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

****News at the Third Age - NATTA****

The National Newsletter – News at The Third Age (NATTA) - is out this week, so don't miss your chance to hear the latest U3A news and stories from around the UK.

U3A members can sign up to receive the newsletter individually - just visit the U3A website at u3a.org.uk.

Each month, you will receive updates from U3As across the country, as well as any national and regional U3A news. Newsletters also include the latest in U3A events and media opportunities, plus advice and resources.

This month there are updates on Research and Shared Learning Projects, the current U3A news and different ways to get involved with exciting new media projects.

Past newsletters are available to view on the U3A website at u3a.org.uk/about/newsletter.



Focus on.....Music



"If music be the food of love, play on."

Apologies for the obvious quote, but can Shakespeare be beaten ? Editor

Classical Music P.M.

Next year we will celebrate five years of meeting each month to listen to music. We now have fourteen members and we meet on the third Wednesday in a member's home.



We take it in turns to lead the session and our topics vary from composers (Rossini, Bach, Jenkins, Ivor Novello) to themes (spring, one hit wonders) to personal medleys of favourites. In the next months we'll be exploring insects, listening to the New Year concert from Vienna and each playing our favourite Christmas themed piece.



We also have group outings to local concerts. We enjoy the lunchtime concerts by Oundle school students at St Peter' Church on Thursday lunch times and last week eight of us attended the concert by Rutland Symphonia at the same venue. (see photo!)

We have been full for most of our existence and so a second group was formed this year, Classical Music a.m.

Glyn Hill Group Leader glynishill06@aol.com

Classical Music A.M.

This group meets in members' houses, every third Wednesday in the month. We are simply "classical music", a term which includes a wide spread of genres, composed over several hundred years, from many countries, although most of it is from Europe.



Strictly speaking, the classical period in music is that period from the time of Haydn and Mozart, to Beethoven and even Schubert, when it changed into the Romantic movement, so we spend a morning listening to recordings from roughly 1775 to 1825, those composers centred on Vienna (the so-called First Viennese School).

We base a session on a particular theme, as chosen by the member presenting it. In the past few months, we have enjoyed and talked about the following examples:

A wonderful film about Edward Elgar, including those pieces making up the secret codes in his Enigma Variations. We delved into the sometimes dark and disturbing world of Franz Schubert, including one song that inspired Bob Dylan's "Mr Tambourine Man". Another morning was devoted to religious music, a spiritually uplifting session, with YouTube recordings giving us sound and vision. This was followed by Karl Jenkins, whose output is now very popular, his cantata "The Armed Man" a thoughtful piece. Our last meeting was all about film music, with a few surprises, as well as clips from the films.

Our music comes to us through various media, CD, DVD, YouTube, iTunes and Spotify, with not an LP in sight! We have space for another two members, so if you would like to give us a try, and enjoy a home concert, please email me. No musical knowledge is needed, just a wish to hear and enjoy something different.



Michael Henderson Group Leader

Email: mhenderson48@gmail.com



UKULELE GROUP

The Ukulele Group continues to expand its numbers, repertoire, ability, and capacity to have fun.

We have met all through the summer and were, once again, honoured to be asked by the Town Council to perform at the Queen's Tea Party in the park. This was to celebrate Her Majesty's Sapphire Jubilee – a remarkable 65 years on the throne! We were asked to play songs with “blue” in the title. This was not easy to achieve without having our audience weeping into their scones. We did however manage to find several happy blue songs! The weather was not kind to us and several of our number found their chairs sinking quietly into the ground whilst they valiantly played on – listing alarmingly! It was quite reminiscent of the Titanic going down. Thankfully, no-one started playing “Nearer My God To Thee”!

We are now busy rehearsing for Christmas entertainments and Care Home sing-a-longs. If you know of an organisation e.g. Care Home, Daycare Centre, Over 60s Club etc, or even a birthday party that would enjoy a bit of a knees-up please let me know and we will be happy to do whatever we can.

We do not charge but cake or biscuits are never refused!

If you would like more information about the group or its activities please contact me.

Marion Healey

018320720262

marion.u3aukuleles@gmail.com



Two months on from our relaunch, and we are busy preparing for the Yuletide Event. We're playing with the ukulele group to provide some entertainment and backing music for the Line Dancing Group. Hope you've got your ticket!!



After the relaunch announced at the September monthly meeting, we had three new members sign up, though for various reasons they haven't all managed to start properly with us yet. We currently have guitars (acoustic, electric and bass), ukuleles, harmonicas, keyboard, cajon and vocalists. But we're up for having more members – whatever you can play, you will be welcome.



As well as brushing up on a few old favourites, we started learning a few new songs, before focussing on the “sixties” and Christmas favourites for the Yuletide Event. In the New Year, we'll be tackling some more new tunes to stretch our skills!!

We meet every first and third Wednesday morning 10:00am at Thrapston Baptist Church, St Pauls Gardens.

Contact Neil on 07977 413 424 or namathieson@gmail.com for any more details.

News from the Groups

Theatre and Outings Group



Outings - Rockingham Castle



On Wednesday 29 November, we had a wonderful group visit to Rockingham Castle. Although it was raining when we left Thrapston it had stopped by the time we arrived, and a rainbow appeared over the castle. We proceeded to the Victorian tearoom, which was beautifully decorated for Christmas, and all enjoyed our tea, coffee, mulled wine and mince pies.

Our party was divided into 2 groups for guided tours at 11.00 and 11.15. The first group was led by "the butler" and the second group by "the governess". The tours were very informative and the tour guides stayed very much in character. The rooms were "dressed" for Christmas, the goodies in the kitchen

looked very tempting and the dining room table was superb.

Before and after the tours we had some time to look around the gardens or wander down to the church, finishing off with a little retail therapy in the gift shop.

I think everyone enjoyed their visit to Rockingham and a few said they would like to return in the summer when the gardens would be in full bloom.

I hope to announce some trips planned for 2018 at the February meeting and in the February newsletter, so keep your eyes open.

Jenni



Theatre dates for your 2018 diaries

We now have two more exciting theatre trips booked for the coming year;

Thursday 19th April, 2:15pm matinee performance of **An Officer and a Gentleman**

at the Curve Theatre, Leicester

Tickets are £20 each, excluding coach travel (approximate full price: £28)

Thursday 20th September, 2:30pm matinee performance of **Warhorse**

at Milton Keynes theatre.

Tickets are £47 each, excluding coach travel (approximate full price: £55)

Please come and sign up at our next Branch Meeting in January to be sure of a seat for one or both of these amazing shows.



Mamma Mia – Thursday 1st February (2:30pm)

Royal and Derngate Theatre, Northampton

To all those who have booked to see the above show, we will be handing out street maps of the centre by the theatre, together with a list of coffee bars and restaurants, at our Branch meeting in January, to help you plan your day in advance.

We are always interested in your ideas and feedback. Please keep them coming!

moira.newton@icloud.com

jennihall207@gmail.com

Greyhounds November 2017

On 3rd November 48 members ventured to the Greyhound Stadium in Peterborough for our twice yearly visit. We enjoyed the races — with varying degrees of success (or failure!) with the betting and a good meal with friends.

The “Cindy Birthday Stakes” was the highlight race — as the picture shows!

An enjoyable evening for everyone and our thanks, as ever, to Irene for organising this for us —we are already looking forward to the next visit!

Contact Irene Gandy for more information



Stitchers Group



The newly formed Stitchers Group is to meet at the Thrapston Town Council Offices on Thursday mornings from 10am to 12 noon, starting on Thursday January 11th 2018!

We hope to share our skills and probably learn some new ones, over a cup of coffee (and perhaps a biscuit!)

If you would like to join us, contact

Wendy Davies 01933 623047

email: w6davies@gmail.com

BLACKWORK * Patchwork * Cross Stitch * Embroidery * Knitting * Crochet * Stump Work * QUILTING

Thrapston and District U3A Committee

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Vice Chair: Viv Tunstall

Treasurer: Tricia James

Secretary: Pauline Johnson

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A note from the Editor

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

Please note that items for inclusion in the next newsletter should reach the Editor by the first Friday in the month.

Editor and publisher : Wendy Davies - email: editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com

Website : www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk where committee contact details may be found along with details of all the groups.

You can also join us on **Facebook – Thrapston and District U3A**

