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Chairman's April Message



The seasons march on and we are a third of the way through 2025. There have been some amazing activities and events we have enjoyed in the past twelve months. With the AGM just over the horizon and a new committee is forming to steer us well into 2026 we can be assured of much more to come.

There is still time for you to join this dedicated team and make an impact with your own ideas.

Have you visited our Facebook page yet? It is a credit to our members and particularly to Helen Dawson who manages it and has made an enormous difference. That's what you get when it is in the hands of someone who knows what they are doing. Helen is always pleased to get comment and quotes from our Groups and members that are the very essence of our being.

It is rewarding to see our membership numbers showing a steady increase again as annual subscriptions are paid. I am aware that there is a possibility of new groups starting up and assistance is readily available for anyone wishing to start a new interest group.

Our March speaker was Michael Burton with his fascinating tale of Kenya – Britain's Golden Colony and another engaging and knowledgeable presenter.

I am looking forward to the coming months and like many of our members, especially our Gardening group watching the tiny seeds shoot and develop into the flowers and plants that fill our gardens and parks. It may be as close to an annual miracle that we will ever see.

With the warmer months there is an opportunity to participate in outside activities and if you haven't already tried it then the Nordic walking group is certainly something to consider. How about the proposed summer sports evening that you will have heard about? I realise we are not athletes but there is scope for gentle exercise, fun and fresh air.

Easter is late this year and our Plaza meeting still takes place on the third Friday of the month which this year is Good Friday. I am looking forward to seeing you all there.

Live, Laugh & Learn! **Paul**



Monthly Meetings

18 April 2025 & 16 May 2025

Doors open @ 10:00 am.— Presentation starts @ 10:30 am

Call of the Kingfisher

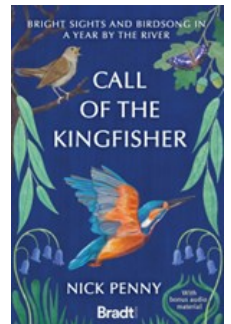
18th April 2025: Speaker Nick Penny



Call of the Kingfisher is the enchanting nature-writing debut from musician and wildlife recordist Nick Penny.

Discover why he describes his book as a “love letter to a short stretch of Northamptonshire’s River Nene” and celebrate a year of taking in the glorious sights and sounds of the riverbank.

As well as talking entertainingly about his experiences while researching and writing the book, Nick also performs some of his own live music on Harp and Handpan to accompany birdsong recordings he has made.



The History & Mystery of the Victorian Punch & Judy Show

16th May 2025: Speaker Mel Harvey

Mel Harvey is an all-round professional entertainer, comedian, magician and if the picture is to be believed, musician. Mel’s talk covers the History and Mystery of the Victorian Punch and Judy show and includes a performance of the show. So, prepare to be taken back to sea-side memories of crocodiles and sausages and dripping ice cream.





Kenya, Britain's Golden Colony

21st March 2025: Speaker Michael Burton

Michael's talk looked at Britain's history of colonialism in Africa, and particularly, Kenya.

Up to the 19th century, most developed European countries had little interest in Africa. They would trade with them, but had no desire to travel inland, since there was no infrastructure, many dangers and diseases like Malaria. It was not until railways were built and gold and diamonds discovered that this changed.

Britain was a trading nation, and its greatest trading partners were India and China in the east. This meant long and perilous journeys around Africa by sailing ships. When the Suez Canal was built, it took thousands of miles off those journeys, reducing time and costs. So important was it to Britain's prosperity that it began to seize lands all along the canal's route to protect its interests. In 1895 Britain established the East Africa Protectorate (EAP) which was primarily intended to secure British strategic interests in the region, including trade routes to India and control over the resource-rich interior. It facilitated British colonisation by imposing administrative control, managing relations with local tribes, and promoting economic exploitation, such as agriculture and railway construction, which connected the coast with the interior.

Following WW1, Britain took control the lands of Kenya and Tanganyika from Germany. To exploit the fertile lands of Kenya, the EAP built the Ugandan Railway. Whilst this was funded by the British government, the costs had to be repaid. This presented a problem for Kenya, who need to find the cash. They hit upon the idea of inviting the British aristocracy to move to Kenya and build large farms. Many did just that and Kenya became rich and prosperous, forcing indigenous farmers onto infertile land and making them work on European-owned farms and plantations. This led to widespread discontent among the local population.

Particularly effected was the Kikuyu tribe. Natural businessmen and agriculturist, they found themselves excluded, moved to the Rift Valley, but denied ownership of the land they worked. This was a classic example of British arrogance and ignorance of tribal laws and traditions.

One of the Kikuyu's brightest, was a young man called Jomo Kenyatta. Jomo Kenyatta, born as Kamau wa Ngengi in 1897 in Gatundu, British East Africa (present-day Kenya). Kenyatta's quest for knowledge led him to pursue education at a young age, eventually studying at the prestigious London School of Economics. Whilst in England, he met and married an English woman. His time in England exposed him to ideas of socialism, pan-Africanism, and anti-colonialism, which deeply influenced his political ideology.

After returning to Kenya in 1946, Kenyatta became involved in grassroots organizing, advocating for land rights, African representation, and an end to British colonial rule. He founded the Kenya African Union (KAU) in 1947, the first political organization that aimed to unite various Kenyan tribes in their struggle against colonial oppression. Kenyatta rapidly gained popularity among the Kenyan masses, earning him the title "Mzee" (meaning "elder" or "respected leader" in Swahili).

Contd on next page

Kenya, Britain's Golden Colony - cont

British Farmers began to evict Kikuyu workers by force and an uprising began. By 1950 murders were being carried out under the name of Mau-Mau. While president of the nationalist Kenya African Union, Kenyatta was sentenced to seven years imprisonment in 1953 in alleged connection with the violent 1952 Mau-Mau rebellion. He denied this affiliation. Britain sent in the troops and the Kikuyu fled to the forest. Thirty-two settlers died and over 1000 Kikuyu were hanged with thousands more jailed and punished.

After his release, Kenyatta negotiated the constitutional terms of Kenya's independence, and in 1963 he became prime minister of a free Kenya. In 1964, Kenyatta transitioned from a parliamentary system to a one-party republic and became president. His government comprised members of various ethnic groups to calm ethnic tensions.

This was an outstanding talk by Michael, delivered with energy, enthusiasm and deep knowledge, having lived in Africa himself and studied as a historian. It was also balanced in its summary. Yes, Britain was largely the architect of its own troubles and overly harsh in the putdown of the uprising. On balance, however, Michael concluded the benefits of colonialism – Infrastructure, schools, church, medical services, prosperity etc - probably outweighed the downside. It's also important to remember that the colonisation of Africa was not a purely British venture, but that of all developed nations, who carved it up and exploited it for their own means.

You never know what you're getting with speakers, but this time we hit the jackpot and we hope to have Michael back again in the future.



Report by Frank Boydell



This month's story Jean Swingler

Coming Home : Thrapston Born and Bred

I am proud to say I am Thrapston born and bred. I was born in 1942 in what was then called Washington Street – the Oundle Road end of Highfield Road. My husband was also born and bred in Thrapston, in Oakleas Rise. After attending Thrapston County Primary School – now the nursery in Huntingdon Road, I passed my 11+ and attended Kettering Central School, a Technical High School.

I left school at 16 and started to work in the Accounts department of Smith & Grace Screw Boss Pulley Company Ltd in Midland Road with Walter Swingler who was the Assistant Company Secretary. Sadly, Mr Swingler died on my 20th birthday and that was when I took over the wages of the foundry workers. On a weekly basis I had to calculate the wages, deduct income tax due and write out every pay packet. All without the aid of a computer. I then had to phone the bank and advise them of the various denominations of cash (£1 and 10/- notes, 2 shillings and 1 shilling, sixpences and 2d and 1d pieces) I needed. On Friday morning, I got on my bike, peddled down to the National Westminster Bank, collected the cash and rode back again, before filling each pay packet with the relevant cash. It was a great relief when the foremen for the foundry and machine shop collected all the pay packets and handed them out to the workers, luckily with very few complaints.

I married Denis Swingler in 1966, moved into our first home in Montague Court and we have two wonderful sons. Our first move was to Chicago in the United States where Denis was sent by his company, Baker Perkins Ltd of Peterborough, to help set up a new branch there. After 3 years, we came back to England and bought a house in Stilton, near Peterborough. I worked in a school in Peterborough, Denis continued to work for Baker Perkins but eventually took early retirement and set up his own Driving School. When we both retired, we sold our house and bought a plot of land in Ireland, had a bungalow built there, and spent some very happy, memorable years before once more returning to England after 9 years, as we decided we needed to be nearer to family. It was then we returned to our roots and have lived back in Thrapston for the past 11 years. We joined the Thrapston U3A and became members of the Creative Writing Group. Denis also joined the Ukelele Group and I attended the Line Dancing Group. Sadly, Denis died in May, 2024 after a number of years suffering, mainly from kidney failure.



The Bungalow we built in Ireland



View from our house across the Feale valley.

Thrapston & District U3A

Annual General Meeting

May 16th 2025

The Plaza, Thrapston

To commence at 10.15. Doors will open at 9.45.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 2024 AGM
3. Chairman's Report
4. Group Co-ordinator's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Approval of the examined accounts
7. Approve appointment of the Examiner of Accounts
- 8.. Election of the Committee for 2025/26 - Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Business Secretary, (the Executive Members), and a committee of 8 other members.

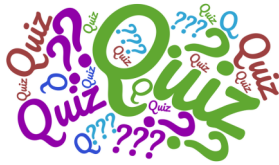
* Please note all written nominations must be received no later than 10:00 am on Saturday 19th April 2025

Nomination forms are available from Committee members and on the website www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk

Viv Tunstall

Business Secretary

2nd April 2025



THRAPSTON'S MAYOR'S QUIZ NIGHT

THE PLAZA - 3rd MAY 2025

Saturday evening 7.00 for 7.30

Teams of 4-6

*Our U3A has reserved 16 places
(some of which are already taken)*

£10 PER PERSON (PAYMENT IN ADVANCE)

Includes the following meal options :-

FISH & CHIPS, SAUSAGE & CHIPS OR CHEESE CROQUETTE & CHIPS

TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE EMAIL: CHAIRMANTHRAPSTONU3A@GMAIL.COM

Sports Evening with BBQ – Friday 27th June

at

Islip Sports Pavillion 5.30pm to 8.00pm



Rounders and other Team Games for Big Kids and Big Softies

Venue: Islip Pavillion & Sports Field

Sports Evening from 5.30pm to 8.00pm on Friday 27th June 2025

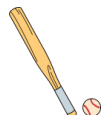
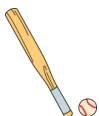
*Tickets £5.00 each (u3a members only).

*BBQ of burgers etc. Bring your own drinks.

*Tea & Coffee included.

*Tickets strictly limited to the first 50 applicants.

*Lots of fun for a midsummer evening. Tickets on sale at the next Plaza meeting.



Thrapston u3a 'It's a Wonderful Life' Group

Have you ever seen an activity and thought 'I'd like to try that' but been too nervous to try alone, or didn't know how to begin...

I'm proposing starting a u3a 'It's a Wonderful Life' group.

Why do we need such a group?

We all need a nudge sometimes to get out of our comfort zone, try something new and have an adventure – and it's always much easier in a group!

Adventures: These could be anything from trying out boating or sailing, escape rooms, trampolining and for the more sedate, pottery painting, jewellery making etc.

In fact, anything you wouldn't normally do!

Who's invited?

All members of u3a would be invited to join in, some activities would have a maximum number so first to sign up, and some activities might have a higher cost than others – you don't need to take part every month.

Purpose.

To try out a whole range of new activities!

How often would we meet?

Bi-Monthly or once a month depending on interest

Spoiler Alert.

Whilst I'm putting forward the idea, that doesn't automatically mean I would be the Group Leader. There are far more experienced people than me. However, I would envisage everyone in the group contributing ideas of what to try next and maybe 2-3 people running the group and booking activities. Lots of help would be given.



Interested?

Contact: Helen Dawson on speakersthrapstonu3a@gmail.com

Put It's a Wonderful Life in the subject matter.

Summer Leys 5th March Butterfly & Birdwatching report

On arrival at Summer Leys nature reserve the sun was shining and the skies were blue with a cool breeze blowing across the lake, a lovely morning for a walk around the nature reserve.

Six of us made the trip and we headed to the Rotary bird hide which overlooks the left hand area of the lake. Plenty of birds on the water but apart from the usual squabbling Coots near the shore most of the birds were far out on the lake, including Lapwings, Tufted ducks, White Egrets, Mallards, Swans, Cormorants, Shoveler ducks and Black headed gulls.



After a while with not much happening we decided to move further along the lake to the next bird hide. As we walked along the path by the lake it was great to see Great tits and Blue tits in the trees and bushes alongside the path. Colin spotted a Goldcrest, (Britain's smallest bird) and managed a lovely photo, by the time I got there it had gone too high into the tree and was hard to see.



Great Tit

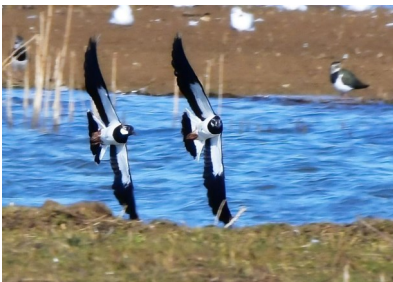


Blue Tit



Goldcrest

We reached the next hide and the waterfowl were a bit closer to the bank, the Shoveler ducks were busy doing their mating ritual, with the males and females circling with each other, the Lapwings and Golden Plovers were putting on a fine flying display and the Black Headed gulls were busy patrolling the lake.



Lapwings



Golden Plovers



Black Headed Gulls

By now it was nearly 12.00 and time to head home, another lovely morning walk at a great venue and looking forward for the Spring butterflies appearing soon. Many thanks to Colin for his photos
Bob Simpson

Spring butterflies

With the cold and dark winters days a fading memory and with the warm April weather now with us, our spring butterflies are once again on the wing. Some of these, such as the Brimstone, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Red Admirals have awakened from winter hibernation and are busy laying eggs for the next generation which will appear around July.



Red Admiral



Brimstone



Peacock



Comma

All our other butterfly species will have over-wintered as either eggs, caterpillars or camouflaged chrysalises discreetly hanging from branches and leaves. Some of these butterflies such as the attractive Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Large and Small White, Dingy and Grizzled Skippers have already hatched and can be seen locally.

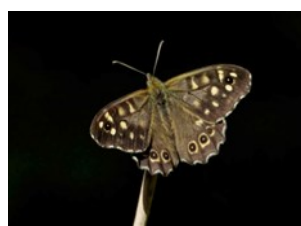
If you are out for a walk on a sunny warm day look at the hedgerows, bushes, grasses and wildflowers and you may be lucky enough to spot some of these beautiful insects going about their short but busy lives.



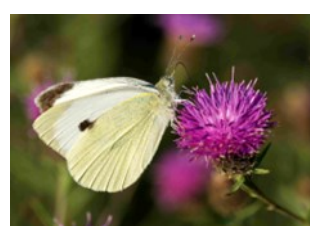
Orange Tip



Small Tortoiseshell



Speckled Wood



Large White

Many of these butterflies will also visit your garden in search of nectar and butterfly kinship so keep an eye out for these visitors and enjoy our lovely spring weather.

Bob Simpson
Butterfly and Birdwatching group



Telephone numbers given in the newsletter are usually preceded by the Thrapston STD code—01832.
Any Raunds numbers (indicated by R) need the STD code 01933

Thrapston and District U3A Committee 2024/2025

Chair: Paul Ollett	chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Vice Chair: Frank Boydell	vicechair2thrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Treasurer: Ann Thorpe	treasurerthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Secretary: Viv Tunstall	secretarythrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Groups Co-Ordinator: Roger Davies	groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
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Speaker Seeker: Frank Boydell	speakersthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
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New Members Representative: Angela Gyves	repthrapstonu3a@gmail.com

Off Committee Role 2024/2025

Access Advisor: Glyn Hill	accesssthraptonu3a@gmail.com
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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 last day of the month.

Editor and publisher : Tina Jones - email: editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com

Website : www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk where details of the committee and their roles can be found along with details of all the groups.

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

APRIL

Thrapston & District U3A is a registered charity number 1179593