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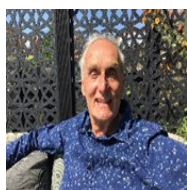
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Musings from the Chair:

After the busy month of June, July has been relatively quiet and I've had chance to reflect on some of the Groups I regularly engage with. As I write, I've just got back from a 23.5-mile ride with the cycling group. Started back in 2013, the group has run continuously for 52 weeks a year. Amazingly, we have rarely been cancelled by the weather, even in the depths of winter, though the numbers fluctuate with the severity. Most people have gravitated to electric bikes, which is hardly surprising, as we're all 12 years older than when we started. Recently, new – and younger - members have swelled the numbers, which is great news.

Like a prodigal son, I recently returned to Making Music after a break of 8 years. It was great to see the group stronger, better organised and equipped than ever. With an eclectic mix of instruments including flute and violin and everyone just having fun. A real credit to the organisers, I look forward to many more Wednesday mornings with my musical friends.

Lastly, I couldn't not mention the youngest group in our u3a, The Silver Wheelers. A classic example of "if there isn't a group you'd like to join, start one". From a suggestion to reality took just a few days and the group meets officially once a month, but practically almost every week as we ride out to bike meets, country fairs etc. A unique feature of this group is that it has its own WhatsApp group, providing instant communication and lots of banter and ideas. Something other groups might like to try.....The common feature of all our u3a groups, is the amazing work put in by the Group Leaders and the willingness of members to get involved and share the load. Well done everyone.

Finally, I couldn't finish without a mention of the Social Group. These are the special people who organise our social functions and are right now planning, organising and executing the Summer Social at the Sailing Club. Later they'll be doing the same for the Christmas Social. I always imagined an army of workers behind the scenes (like Santa's Elves), so was amazed when we met up, to discover just 6 dedicated members organising everything. We all have so much to thank them for, so if they ask for helpers, please step up.....Frank



Monthly Meetings

15th August 2025 The Summer Event

19th September 2025 presentation



Thrapston and District U3A Social Group

The Summer Event at the Sailing Club, August 15th 2025

The gates at the Sailing club will open at 11.45 on the day
and the bar will also be open.

Unfortunately the boat is not available this year for the trip around the lake

Don't forget to bring your ticket as it will go into the raffle draw.

Polly on behalf of the Social Group

Email psjohnson2710@gmail.com - Tel:07867 573219



How to Love Poetry

19th September: Speaker Bert Flitcroft

Bert Flitcroft was born and brought up in Lancashire but now lives in the Midlands. A graduate of Sheffield University, he is an experienced and accomplished poet who for some time has been quietly and unassumingly spreading the poetry word as teacher, mentor, work shop leader, poet-in-residence, and reader. He has four collections of poetry published: 'Thought-Apples', 'Singing Puccini at the Kitchen Sink', 'Just Asking', and 'Seeing the Light



Thrapston and District

THRAPSTON TOWN TREASURE HUNT

To celebrate National U3A week

Saturday 20 September 2.00 - 4.30

Come and collect your quiz sheet (£1) anytime between 2 and 3.30 from our stall on the High Street (next to Jolly's) and follow the clues to explore the town and learn more about our history and places of interest

Everyone welcome

Small prize for every completed quiz sheet

The U3A is for anyone who is no longer in full-time employment.



This month's story: Eric Franklin



I was born at the end of the 1940's in Mitcham, Surrey (now part of the London Borough of Merton), a pleasant and safe community with two large Commons nearby in Mitcham and Streatham. Childhood for me and my younger brother was largely uneventful – we found ways to amuse ourselves with money being very limited and spent much time outdoors and, looking back, must have been very fit. Although we knew of extended family, the only ones we had contact with were in Brisbane and had to wait until 2003 before I met any of them. I only knew one grandparent, who died when I was 6. The studio photo of me was taken when I was 2½.

Although I managed to get a place at the local Grammer School aged 11, I was not the most academic of pupils, but still managed 6 O Levels and one A. My first full-time job was in a pharmaceutical research laboratory at the Angel, North London. I moved to Birkenhead in 1969 to take an HND course and remember seeing the Liverpool waterfront for the first time, a very grubby and run-down place complete with working steam tugs and liners, much the same as I remember the Thames in central London in the 1950's. In 1970 Mary and I became "an item" and have remained so ever since.



After the course ended, I moved to a small village near Winchester where I worked in a children's home for two years until 1973 when we were married in Thornton Heath, Croydon. Obviously I have changed a little since then having maybe a bit more waistline and less hair! We moved to live in Northampton a few months later when I was appointed to work for Northampton County Borough Social Services Department. In 1975 we moved to Earls Barton, then to Thrapston in 1982, where we have remained.

After four years it was appropriate that I took my Social Work qualification course which was completed at Leicester Polytechnic College in December 1979. I then transferred to the Wellingborough office of Northants Social Services where I worked for five years, predominantly, with abusive families and juvenile offenders. Involving often long working days, and with our young family aged between 4 and 1 it was time for a move.

I changed authority and workplace in 1986 becoming one of four very experienced and qualified social workers at Hinchingbrooke Hospital in Huntingdon. Ten very worthwhile years ensued with my rapidly developing high expertise with people who had self-harmed. Covering the whole hospital, our small team were well known and respected throughout, this probably being my most productive time as a social worker. As well as working in the hospital, I was also an Approved Social Worker under the Mental Health Act, necessitating my being on-call for the Huntingdon District every 3 weeks whenever an urgent community mental health assessment, and often, compulsory hospital admission, was needed. These cases never took less than 6 hours to complete and often up to 10, not easy when the call came at 4.00pm after a day at work.

To relax after work, I began swimming locally 3 times a week, covering a mile each time. I enrolled for the annual Swimathon Challenge, 5km non-stop in 1993, which I did for the next 14 years until recovery was taking over a week!

In 1996 I was offered an early retirement aged 47, which I happily accepted. By then, Mary had been teaching at Thrapston Primary School for 6 years. I spent a year running a Welfare Rights advice group in town, then trained as a pool lifeguard and worked part-time shifts at both Thrapston Swimming Pool and Splash in Rushden.

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Eric Franklin Contd



In 1998 I became manager of the Thrapston Pool, being in charge for 3 years. A brief time as a locum at Kettering General Hospital Social Work Department for just over a year brought the final curtain down on my social work career in 2003 which coincided with my election onto Thrapston Town Council. This was also the year Mary and I had our first holiday in Australia, spending time with family in Brisbane as well as swimming on the Great Barrier Reef and visiting the Daintree rainforest.

I was on the Town Council for 9 years, serving as Mayor in 2006/7 and was also an elected member of the Northamptonshire Association of Local Councils County Committee for 5 years.

By the time I had reached 50, I began an interest in both my personal Family History and the Local History of this area, these continuing to the present day. I write a monthly article on an aspect of local history for the Thrapston Life magazine and have done so each month since May 2016. I have a large personal archive which I am happy to share with anyone who is interested.

Our last major holiday abroad was in 2019 when we returned to Australia, staying in Melbourne, Sydney where I am pictured in front of an illuminated Harbour Bridge, and Brisbane. Amongst the highlights was a day whale-watching and being very near a mother humpback whale with her calf just off Moreton Island, Queensland.

Now, we try to go out for a local walk each day and are very grateful to live in this pleasant semi-rural area. Thrapston has become home, and we love it here.

Eric Franklin

Free Mature Drivers Roadshow 16 September 2025 - Daventry

Are you a mature driver (aged 60+)?
Live in Northamptonshire? Rely on being able to drive?
This FREE roadshow is for you!

Driving is an important part of our everyday life and we (Northamptonshire Safer Roads Alliance (NSRA)) are keen to help to keep mature drivers driving safer for longer.

Our driving ability to drive changes over time for different reasons, especially as we get older. It's important that we recognise whether and how our driving is changing so we can stay safe and protect both ourselves and those around us.

This Mature Drivers Roadshow is aimed at drivers 60+, and will cover all different aspects of driving. There will be a short talk and then plenty of time to meet informally with our many stand holders.

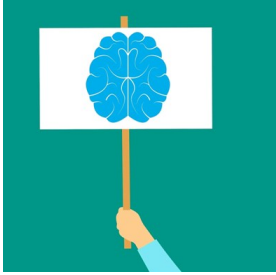
There will be FREE hints and tips drives available to book, delivered Northampton Advanced Motorists.

Our aim is to keep mature drivers driving safer, for longer.

Book your Free tickets via Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/northants-mature-driver-roadshows-4099083>

The event is being held at The Icon Innovation Centre, Eastern Way, Daventry NN11 0QB (what3words.com/reduce.stealthier.handbags) with two sessions, 9.30am and 1.00pm.





Keeping your Brain Happy and Healthy - Part 2

By Helen Dawson



Last month I wrote about Blue Zones, this week's topic to ensure you keep your brain healthy is Gratitude. Have you heard about practicing gratitude? Every evening wrote down three good things from your day, things that you are grateful for, they can be as small as 'the sun shone today' or 'I got all my chores done really quickly today' to much larger more profound things.

Practicing gratitude daily;

- Gives you a hit of dopamine (a happiness hormone) when you recall and write down the memory.
- You get another hit of dopamine when you reread some of the good things you've written in days past, as your brain relives the memory.
- What's more, it trains your brain to be on high alert all day looking for good things to add to your little book – what could be better!

Dementia runs in my family, mother and father, uncle on my mother's side and nan on the same side too all spring to mind, so I am particularly enthusiastic when it comes to dementia research and in particular steps you can take yourself to keep well.

SINGING FOR FUN (SING TO FEEL GOOD)

We are now having our summer holidays as too many of us have other commitments during the next few weeks.

All being well I expect to re-start on Friday October 10th

We meet in Thrapston Baptist Church on the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month from 1.30 to 3pm.

We welcome new members so come along for a relaxing and fun end to your week.

It is not a choir so absolutely no singing or music skills are required: we just have a good old-fashioned sing-along to a very wide selection of music. I display the words on a screen and play music through a speaker so all you have to do is sit back and sing like you in your bath!

I look forward to seeing you in October.

Marion Healey
07989 985722





Thrapston, Our u3a & Me

I remember quite clearly my first visit to Thrapston which would have been in November or December 1969 and it was in the evening. Back in those days I was on the threshold of living in Northamptonshire having found work in my trade as a carpenter and in the process of buying a semi-detached two-bedroom bungalow in Higham Ferrers.

This was way before the A14 was built and the approach to Thrapston was along the single carriageway of the A604. I remember particularly the mist hanging in the dips in the road before Islip and eventually crossing the nine arches bridge for the first time into the town, a very different place to what we know today.

Previously I vaguely recalled reading of Thrapston in an unsavory account in the News of the World of alleged witchcraft activities in a local quarry but other than that knew absolutely nothing about the town. Little did I realise that one day I would meet a girl who had worked in the town since Adam was a lad and indeed that I would, with the same lady, now as my wife move here in 2012. It's fair to say I have learned a lot since those distant days.

Our home on Lazy Acre is comfortable and well positioned and as we settled in, we did what most people do with a new home by throwing a lot of it away, making alterations and generally personalizing the place.

Now with us both retired but still reasonably fit and keen walkers we joined Thrapston & District u3a which seemed to have many people in a similar situation as ourselves. It offered a wide horizon of activities for us to sample as well as the stuff we already enjoyed. I have since joined groups for French language, photography, cycling, table tennis motorcycling and the butterfly and birdwatching group. Sadly, the walking group is now defunct.

I have found out that the u3a can kind of 'creep up on you' and before too long I was encouraged, (hood winked)? Into joining the committee as "Speaker Seeker". It was a job that I didn't have a clue on how to carry it out but what the hell, I'll give it a go. Starting from a pile of hand written records of previous speakers I got organised and made approaches to various individuals who had a tale to tell and I have to say that I actually enjoyed it.

Often it would involve a negotiation to agree an appropriate fee and I was ever mindful of my set financial budget. It's amazing how a sharp intake of breath through the teeth can favourably affect the outcome. It is a technique used by plumbers when contemplating a repair at your home.

After around five years as Speaker Seeker and with the role of Chairman falling vacant, I agreed to take on this challenging role but not without first creating an exit strategy and I was very clear that I would serve two years and then leave the post. Just like a proficient burglar entering your home for robbery will always choose an escape route and the best ones get away!

Well, I have to say that I really enjoyed my tenure as chairman of Thrapston & District u3a and with an excellent group of highly competent individuals in support we were up for the many problems and interesting events that our group faced in those two years from May 2023 to May 2025. I have always relished problem solving when often something or other would come bounding over the horizon completely out of the blue and we had the team to deal with it.

Naturally there were surprises and for me the greatest of these was the amount of time it was necessary to devote to the u3a. The "buck stops here", as the saying goes and I found myself often hammering away at my computer keyboard when I would probably have preferred to be doing something else.

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Thrapston, Our u3a & Me - Cont.

However, it was not without its rewards and it was an enormous pleasure to attend the monthly meetings, to meet those solid citizens who are our members and to greet new ones. Maybe the Plaza could be renamed The Palace of Smiles as it is indeed a happy place for our u3a meetings. I note that we still have a carefree hour or so with an entertainer who will cause a great big belly laugh be it a Punch & Judy man or a somewhat risqué magician. It is a whole team effort that make these events so popular, from front of house welcomes to the seemingly endless coffee, tea and biscuits.

Well on 16th May 2025 my two years was up and I was a little sad to be leaving this demanding job which had selfishly occupied so much of my time for 24 months but I knew the time was right. I had no regrets, satisfied in the certain knowledge that Thrapston u3a was delivered in a fine state into the caring hands of a new committee, time to move on.

Several people including past chairman have since asked me what am I going to do with all this spare time but you know that time is a vacuum and nature abhors a vacuum. And I have filled it doing things that I choose for myself. So, there you have it, two years well spent in my mind at least. No doubt I didn't please all of the people all of the time and if I managed to please most of the people some of the time then that will have to do.

Lastly many thanks to the countless people who supported me and continue to do so, you are the very salt of the Earth.

Paul Ollett

Forgotten but not gone!

Articles for the Newsletter

Articles which report on group activities are always welcome for the Newsletter.

This helps to encourage more members to join one of the group. If your group has not recently submitted an article so our members know what your group has to offer and what is has been doing why not write a short article for future issues the newsletter.

Please email your articles to Tina to editorthrapstonu3a.com



To all Thrapston U3A gardeners and allotment holders

Free stable manure, for the Autumn garden

It is well rotted and can be easily bagged up or put in a trailer.

Contact John Percy on 01832 720130 or email johnpercy1947@gmail.com

Bob's Butterfly & Birdwatching report 2nd July

For the July outing a trip to Stanwick Lakes was arranged, we just had a week of glorious sunshine and it was peak butterfly time and two days previous to the outing Steph and I had recorded 172 butterflies of 11 different species at the lakes on the volunteer butterfly recording we do every month for the Rockingham Nature Trust.



Banded Damselfly in the rain

The forecast for the 2nd July was a cool 16 degrees and rain from 10.00am to 1.00pm and on arrival at the lakes at 10.30 it was starting to drizzle and there was a bit of a cold breeze, no chance of seeing any butterflies in this weather. We set off towards Kingfisher Bridge hoping to see some birds or signs of wildlife.



Just before the bridge we turned left through the gate and into the field bordered on one side by the river and a lake on the other.

This was one of the areas where two weeks previously some of the 94 water voles which had been especially bred in Devon were released in the hope of establishing them at the lakes. Due to the bankside vegetation there was little chance of actually seeing one, the majority of the group set off looking for signs of them by their "Tic-Tac" shaped droppings along the riverbank. The rest of us were trying to photograph the birds on the lake but by now the rain was getting worse and it was quite chilly. The ladies found some droppings and it looks like the Water Voles are thriving in their new home.



Water Vole droppings

We headed for the bird-hide to shelter from the rain and on the way we noticed the willow trees were covered in webs with hundreds of Willow Ermine moths inside and around them, it was amazing to see so many moths together.



Willow Ermine Moths



Greylag Geese

All was quiet at the first bird hide with no birds or even a squirrel to be seen so we walked across to the hide overlooking a lake, a couple of Great Crested Grebes were diving for fish, some Graylag geese were on the far bank and Coots and Moorhens were patrolling the reed-beds but no sign of a Kingfisher.



Black Headed gull

By now it was nearly midday and time to head for a coffee at the visitor centre, the rain had stopped and the clouds were beginning to clear, as we walked back a Large White butterfly flew across the path in front of us, a sign that the day was brightening up.

Despite the rain and chill breeze we still had a lovely walk with lots to see and good company, also thanks to Paul for his photos and to everyone who came on the walk.Bob Simpson

Snow White

And the 7 ukulele playing Dwarves



Thrapston U3A Radio Repertory Company proudly presents

U3A Christmas isn't officially Christmas without the U3A Radio Repertory Company annual Pantomime.

This year's production will be the famous tale of Snow White and the Seven Ukulele playing Dwarves featuring Snow White, Dwarves, a wicked Queen, an apple, a handsome prince, an apple and a surprise guest appearance.

We are still seeking cast members and a stage manager..

No previous acting experience required

No need to learn lines - it's a radio Pantomime after all

Ukulele skills not required (unless you're a dwarf).

Lots of silliness

Last year's production of a Christmas Carol was a total triumph (well we only had a "few" complaints).

Let's make Snow White a show to remember.

Please contact Alastair Henderson-Begg (alastairhbegg@gmail.com) to sign up.

(The Third Age Trust is the national representative body for The University of The Third Age movement in the UK)

Here's a brief reminder of the additional things that are available to you as a member of our U3A by going to their website

Did you know that as a member of our u3a you can access a wide range of free online learning events such as talks, workshops and courses by going to the third age website, Most sessions are led by members, sharing their expertise plus additional talks from speakers and organisations.

Plus you can subscribe to **Online Interest Groups**. In the same way as our u3a the activities are run by members and are a great way to meet other people from different u3a; However, to join a group you must first be a paid member of Interest groups On Line . Annual membership is £12.00 covering the period 1 st April to 31 March 2026. If you join after 1 st October the fee is reduced to £6.

You can find out much more by going to www.u3a.org.uk

u3a Radio Podcast

The u3a radio podcast, set up in 2020, showcases the amazing things happening across the u3a movement. It's created by a team of u3a members who all have radio experience and features interviews with members, interest group leaders, Trustees, national volunteers and Subject Advisers.

The entire series is available on the **YouTube Channel**.

www.u3a.org.uk/learning/u3a-radio-podcast

The podcast is available on the usual podcast platforms including:

[Spotify](#)
[Apple Podcasts](#)
[Podtail](#)

The team is always looking for more stories so get in touch with them if you'd like to contribute.



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 2025/2026

Chair: Frank Boydell	chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Vice Chair: Helen Dawson	vicechair2thrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Treasurer: Ann Thorpe	treasurerthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Secretary: Viv Tunstall	secretarythrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Groups Co-Ordinator: Pauline Johnson	groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Membership Registrar: Bob Simpson	membershipthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Speaker Seeker & Facebook: Helen Dawson	speakersthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor: Tina Jones	editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Publicity & Access: Glyn Hill	publicity1thrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Plaza Welcome Manager: Wendy Davies	plazawelcomethrapstonu3a@gmail.com
New Members Representative: Angela Gyves	repthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
IT Operations Manager: Donald Symes	itopsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Equipment Manager: Tony Lomer-Cross	equipmentthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
General Committee Duties: Eric Franklin	thrapstonu3acom1@gmail.com

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**



Thrapston & District U3A is a registered charity number 1179593