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Chairman's New Year Message 2025

January 17th was of course our first Plaza meeting of the New Year at which we were regally entertained by Roger Browne and if you were unfortunate to miss his brilliant performance at least you can read about it in the following pages and get a taste of what a great show it was.

It was very pleasing to see how many folks we had at this meeting with one hundred of our regular members the vast majority of whom renewed their membership on the day and we were delighted with the attendance of nineteen visitors some of whom joined our u3a on the day. It indicates that we must be doing something right as our numbers steadily increase.

Please accept my apologies if you had to wait a short time for your refreshments at the start of the meeting. This was due to failure of the Plaza's water heater. Our social team battled on with a kettle and a couple of inadequate temporary replacement urns, but they were unable to provide the normally excellent service due to this adversity. We have raised the matter with the Town Council.

I hope that the members of our u3a will take advantage of the request to have your views and thoughts known, anonymously if you wish but please keep any comments constructive.

We are starting to put together the bare bones of the new committee, hopefully to see our u3a safely into the new year but there is still time for you to join this dedicated team and make an impact with your own ideas.

At national level the u3a is in the process of restructuring and in February an election takes place to add four new members to the National Council. Because we have in excess of 200 members our u3a has 2 votes per candidate and there are nine candidates contesting four seats. It will be interesting to see in the coming months what impact (if any) these changes will make at 'grass roots' level and as far as possible I will keep you informed.

February is here, our hopes for better and warmer weather rise with the lengthening days, there's not a moment to waste and you must take full advantage of everything our u3a has to offer, "live, laugh & learn". Paul



Monthly Meetings

21 February 2025 & 21 March 2025

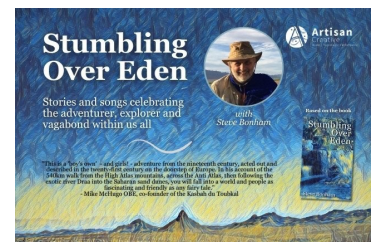
Doors open @ 10:00 am.— Presentation starts @ 10:30 am



Stumbling Over Eden.

21st February 2025 : Speaker Steve Bonham

Following the narrative of a DIY trek from the top of the High Atlas Mountains to the Sahara Desert (550 km), Steve Bonham reflects on the nature of adventure and its rewards weaving in themes of risk-taking, serendipity and companionship. This is a celebration in story, bold ideas and song of the adventurer that lies within us all and invites us to see "beyond the adrenaline high" the true experience of stepping into the unknown and how to make a friend of uncertainty.



Kenya, Britain's Golden Colony

21st March 2025 : Speaker Michael Burton.

Britain's most beloved colony was acquired almost by accident. It attracted an array of characters – some to work, creating a new life, some to “party,” and even aristocrats seeking new fiefdoms. But it imploded spectacularly after the Second World War as a result of intractable problems centring on just one tribe.





The Great American Songbook.
17th January 2025: Speaker Roger Browne
Review by Frank Boydell

Roger comes from Stockport, near Manchester. At the age of 4, Roger's performing career started, doing Al Jolson impressions. At the ripe old age of 8, he appeared on stage for the first time, winning a competition and a prize of a free perm. He was thrilled!

By 15, Roger had learned to play the piano and was performing with a jazz band. It was while playing with the jazz band that Roger started to explore the roots of American music and realised that the songs of Al Jolson had nothing to do with the black Americans of the Southern states. These songs were written by white composers who had never seen a cotton field in their life.

Real black American music began with the Blues, Sung in 12 bar format, which became the basis for all blues and rock'n'roll that evolved thereafter. Being black in the American states, life was very hard. If you failed to pay the rent, then you were not only evicted, but put in jail. Consequently, people would go to any lengths to pay the rent. One way that developed was to hold a rent party, where a cheap piano would be placed in the house and the hat would be placed on the piano. Pianist would compete to see who could play the fastest. The faster they played, the more money went into the hat. At the end of the night, the host would take enough money from the hat to pay the rent and whatever was left over went to the pianist.

Later, New York gave birth to the modern American Playbook. Jews fleeing persecution, settled on the east side of New York and some set up music publishing companies on West Street. They would invite writers to demonstrate their songs on cheap pianos installed for the purpose. As the number of publishers grew West Street became a cacophony of noise as dozens of would-be writers bashed out their tunes for potential publishers. As a result, West Street gained the nickname of Tin Pan Alley.

Many writers became household names, like Erving Berlin (a poor Russian boy who sold newspapers and sang songs for his customers to earn a few coins), George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Gerome Kirn. These writers became rich and famous writing songs for shows on Broadway. One name was synonymous with all of them – Robert Russel Bennet, who arranged and orchestrated their songs for the shows.

Roger Browne delivered his talk with humour, song and performances on keyboard and we were kept entertained and informed throughout. This performance so nearly didn't happen when Roger found himself without transport. Fortunately, he travelled by train and Tony Sands kindly leant his keyboard, amplifier and microphone for Roger to use. Thanks again Tony.





This Month's Story:- Helen Dawson

I was born in the West Midlands in the 1960's. I grew up wanting to be a teacher, so left for Matlock Teacher Training college after my sixth form. I returned back to the Midlands to be a primary school teacher for nearly a decade before deciding it was no longer the profession I had joined.

Since then I've had various, yet linked, professions from Toy Industry PR, Toy Trade magazine editor and more recently self employed in marketing. I've moved around the UK quite a bit over the years, living in Bishops Stortford, Daventry and Brentwood to name a few, but have now settled here in Thrapston, I've been here nearly 20 years now. I retired in 2024 but still dabble and run the Facebook pages of a couple of local companies.

I live with my husband Peter and cocker spaniel Millie, most of you will have seen me walking her around the town at some point!



We have a cruiser moored on the River Great Ouse and thoroughly enjoy our holidays aboard, as does Millie. It's her favourite place! We regularly visit the coast and enjoy mooring at Kings Lynn. When the sun is shining, and the boat is fully provisioned it really is the best place to be. We often record our adventures and even have a YouTube channel called "It's a Boat Thing".

When I'm not aboard the boat, you can find me getting confused about my left and my right at the u3a Tai Chi class, or at the Nene Centre doing Zumba, Yoga and Clubbercise. I also enjoy crafting; I make my own greetings cards, and do various different crafting activities in my craft room at home.





New Kid on the Block! Helen Dawson.

We welcome Helen to Thrapston and District Group u3a Committee and were delighted to introduce her to our members at the Plaza meeting in January.

Helen exudes enthusiasm in all aspects of her life, as a fairly recently retired former primary school teacher and mother. Her husband is a keen boater with their cruiser moored on the River Great Ouse. Helen says that her husband is very definitely the Skipper and she is happy with the role of First Mate.

Initially Helen will be shadowing Frank Boydell as Vice Chair and it is hoped that as she grows in confidence, she will completely adopt the role and bring her own considerable skills to bear, it can do nothing but good.

Helen will also take on the job of keeping our Facebook page up to date. It is an excellent forum to spread the word on our activities

I am confident that Helen who is already an active member of the Tai Chi has the perfect temperament to be a very effective member of our committee.

She will join us at the next committee meeting on 7th February 2025 and is the subject of this month's story.

Paul

Ukelele Group Relaunch

The Ukulele Group, as it was previously, is now no more as the members have all moved on to other things as they feel their playing skills have improved past the level of our group. However, my passion to help others find the joy and fulfilment of playing an instrument remains as strong as ever and, to that end, it is my intention to re-launch the

Ukulele Group as a Beginners and Improvers Group

The simplicity and portability of the ukulele makes it the perfect entry level instrument and only couple of pieces of equipment are necessary. It is my proud boast that I can teach almost anyone to play a simple tune in just an hour or two.

No ukulele? No problem...I have instruments you may borrow.

Never played any instrument before? No problem.... neither had I.

Can't read music? No problem...you don't need to; it is not the way we work.

So, you see there are no barriers to coming along to have a go. The initial meeting will be on Tuesday 11th March, 10.30 at my home. If you are interested, please contact me either by phone or email
Marion Healey

marion.u3aukuleles@gmail.com

07989 985722

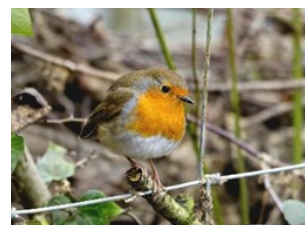


Butterfly & Birdwatching Group,

Barnwell Country Park outing 8th January 2025

Our first outing of 2025 was to Barnwell Country Park, on arrival it was a chilly zero degrees and slightly overcast, we're a hardy lot and eight of us who made the trip were well wrapped and booted up.

We made our way to Mill Lake taking care to avoid the frozen puddles on the path, as you approach the lake you are normally met by a pair of Swans and lots of ducks waiting to be fed but the lake was frozen over and not a bird to be seen. We carried on to the bird hide by the river and as we got there a group of toddlers arrived with their carers on a nature walk, what a lovely thing to do as they all seemed very excited as they watched a Robin taking the mealworms they had put on the fence post.



We went into the bird hide and there were some lovely little Dunnocks looking for food just in front of the hide, a few Great tits made a fleeting appearance along with a couple of Robins but after a while all the activity died down and it was time to move.



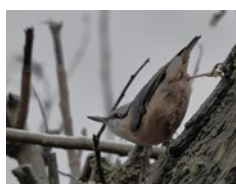
Onwards along the path by the river towards the North Lake and there were a couple of Crows along the way and also five Cormorants drying their wings in tree across the river. We turned the corner and headed towards the small bridge, as we approached bridge a hungry swan was waiting on the path and Steph duly obliged with some duck food.

As we crossed the bridge a couple of Robins and a Dunnock were sitting in the bushes close to us, they were quite a sight as they had puffed up their feathers to keep themselves warm and were quick to feed on the bird seed I put on a tree stump.

Steph and Christine had gone on ahead to the Kingfisher bird hide and on arrival a hungry Robin flew in and landed inches from them, it was very hungry, and it followed Steph out of the hide as she came to get some seed from us, we put some seed on the window sill and robins were flying in to take it. We then put some seed on the ground in front of the hide and a Nuthatch, Great tits, Blue tits, Marsh tits and Dunnocks started flying in which was wonderful to see.



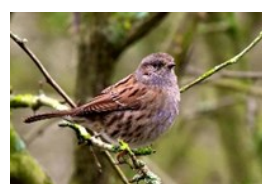
Marsh Tit



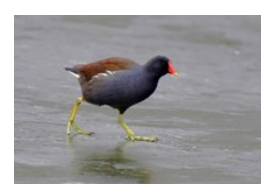
Nuthatch



Robin



Dunnock



Moorhen

By now we were starting to feel the cold and it was time to warm up with a coffee and hot sausage roll at the Kingfisher cafe before we headed home. We had a lovely walk and saw around a dozen species of birds. Looking forward to our next outing in February and hoping it will be a bit warmer by then, also many thanks to Colin and Paul for the photos.

Bob Simpson
Group Leader



U3A INTEREST GROUPS

INTEREST GROUPS ONLINE (abbreviated as IGO) is an online u3a community that gives you the opportunity to join groups, talks and courses from the comfort of your home.

In the same way as your u3a, the activities are run by members and are a great way to meet people from all across the u3a movement.

How to join

It costs £12 to join for the year, equating to £1 per month. Membership runs from 1 April to 31 March of the next year. After 1 October, it costs £6 to join until 31 March next year. Membership and your groups are managed via the u3a Beacon Members Portal.

To become a member of *Interest Groups Online* you will need to fill out a short form and make your payment on the u3a Beacon Members Portal. As part of your subscription to *Interest Groups Online*, you can opt in to receive a free copy of the u3a magazine, *u3amatters*.

Please note, this membership is for *Interest Groups Online* only, it does **not** include membership to local u3as.

If you are interested in joining the *Interest Groups Online* enquiries can be made by sending an email to interestgroupsonline@u3a.org.uk or go to the Third Age Trust web site www.u3a.org.uk where you can find further information about the Interest Groups Online plus many other interesting topics.

Once you have subscribed to *Interest Groups Online*, you can choose which groups to join by taking a look at the groups page for details on the wide variety of online groups, courses and talks.



Hermitage House

A date for your diary Thursday 13th March 2025 4.00pm to 6.00pm

We are invited to join the management and staff at Hermitage House for a:-

Wellbeing Hub

The event is to bring together local support and wellbeing groups offering a an opportunity to:

- Discover a variety of initiatives aimed at enhancing health and wellbeing in our community.
- Connect with like-minded professionals and groups dedicated to making a positive impact.
- Collaborate on ideas and projects to create a healthier, happier community.

For more information contact Jess Grayson 07754 559526

******* Move & Groove Update *******



Please note that due to injury there will still be no classes until at least the beginning of March.

If you need to contact me please phone me on 07931 712056.

Janet



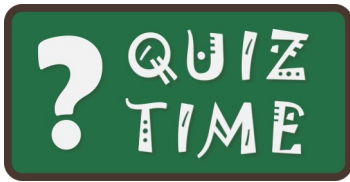
Members Coffee Morning

**Everyone Welcome
Especially members who have joined in
the last few months**

We would love to meet you all and welcome you into our wonderful U3a

Join us at
Islip Cricket Pavilion ,Tollbar Road ,Islip
On
Friday 28th February
10a.m. to 11-30a.m.

Coffee, Tea, Cake and an opportunity for old and new
members to meet new friends and group leaders



Quiz & Chips – January 2025

Each year our town council elects a mayor to be Thrapston's first citizen and among the many civic duties they perform, each mayor will choose a worthy cause as 'The Mayor's Charity' and will raise funds in their term through various events. The current Mayor (2024-25) is Cllr Andy McGovern and his chosen good cause is Northamptonshire Health Charity.

As part of the fund raising, periodically a Quiz & Chips event is arranged at the Plaza where groups are invited to submit teams of between 4 and 6 members to answer a series of questions on a variety of subjects such as Entertainment, Geography, Food & Drink and General Knowledge etc. On 25th January our u3a entered three teams of five for what turned about to be a very amusing evening.

The Plaza was filled with groups of contestants ready for the fray tackling the first task to identify pop music groups from a picture containing lots of clues to try to find a maximum of 30 group names from features in the picture with some more easily identified than others. Individual team answer papers were swapped with neighbouring teams for checking the correctness.

A bar was available with alcoholic and soft drinks and the Fish & Chip suppers were consumed with eagerness before the answers were revealed. Now at this stage I will state that it is not about winning!! More importantly, a lot of fun is derived by just taking part. Least ways that is what I will say in consolation as indeed for us there were no cigars.

Now, I'm not a mathematician but it appears obvious to me that if you have six in a team your chances of success must improve by around 20% on a team with only five? I would also surmise that having someone in the team who, let's say, significantly reduces the average age of the team would also be an advantage but having said that we are not embittered.

It was a fun evening with not a Haggis in sight even though it was Burns Night and we can be proud that we have helped swell the coffers of a worthy charity. After all it was not about winning at all (much). Paul

Paul

Your Stories



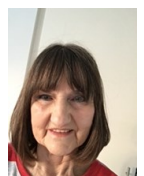
Ever felt like putting pen to paper about your thoughts, experiences, that one forgettable life-changing moment or a whimsical adventure. Why not share it with our members.. Everyone's story is interesting because its unique to you.

Everyone likes to read a good story but without you this feature will be sadly be discontinued. So come on you budding authors why not grab a pen and paper or keyboard and start writing/typing now.

Your stories can be sent to Tina our Editor (editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com).

Alternatively you may prefer to give me your story or speak to me at one of the plaza meetings. Or you can telephone me for a chat on 07718386330 I would love to hear from you. .

Kelly





2025 Membership Renewal

Annual membership for 2025-2026 was due on the 1st February, the cost is £20

Our preferred method of payment is by Bank Transfer, but it can also be made by cheque, payable to Thrapston & District U3A or by cash.

For a bank transfer, please quote your Membership No. and full name as the reference.

Account Name: Thrapston & District U3A A/C No: 73437361 Sort Code: 20 45 77

Membership forms can be downloaded from our website www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk

You can also renew your membership at the Plaza meeting on the 21st membership forms will be available and payment taken at the Membership table.

February Facts



'February brings the rain ,
Thaws the frozen lake again .' Sarah Coleridge

Birth Stones – Amethyst , Blood Stone

Birth Signs – Aquarius , Pisces

Significant dates

Candlemas , Valentines Day , National Yorkshire Pudding Day , Groundhog Day

February is the shortest month of the year . Its name comes from 'ferua' which means purification . The Anglo Saxons called it Salmonath (cake month) as cakes were presented to the gods at this time .

To all Thrapston U3A gardeners and allotment holders

Free stable manure,

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



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
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Secretary: Viv Tunstall	secretarythrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Groups Co-Ordinator: Roger Davies	groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Membership Registrar: Bob Simpson	membershipthrapstonu3a@gmail.com
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Publicity & Facebook: Glyn Hill	publicity1thrapstonu3a@gmail.com
Plaza Welcome Manager: Kelly Wickham	plazawelcomethrapstonu3a@gmail.com
New Members Representative: Angela Gyves	repthrapstonu3a@gmail.com

Off Committee Role 2024/2025

Access Advisor: Glyn Hill accesssthraptonu3a@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