



### In this issue

The Chairman's February Message

Preview February & March Presentations /A North London Childhood Kelly Wickham

Review of January Presentation /Stitchers Group Project / Group Information

Butter & Birdwatching January Report / Potential New Activity Groups

Books Club Information / Major Quiz Review / The 2025/26 Committee

### Musings From the Chairman



January tends to be a pretty miserable month, no one has any money after Christmas, the weather is awful, the pubs are empty and life seems reluctant to drag itself back up to speed after the festive shutdown. Basically, the sooner January is over the better. But not if you're in u3a. January's monthly meeting was an absolute cracker. Those of you lucky enough to be there were in for a treat. Our performer was Lincoln Noel and he rocked the Plaza (Platsa – oohh!) with song, music and humour. Everything from Classical to Songs from the shows, to Jazz, to My Old Man. What a morning. We had a massive turn out and no one went home asking for a refund. Can we have him back again please?

In December's Musings, I asked if our u3a should be officially represented at the town Remembrance Day service. There has been much support for this. As a generation we remember how our parents and grandparents fought and worked through 2 world wars to secure the freedoms which we now take for granted and the peace we have enjoyed in Europe for the last 70 years. Our armed services however, never rest, with further wars in Suez, Korea, The Falklands, Iraq and Afghanistan with some of our brave servicemen and women paying the ultimate price. Following talks with the Royal British Legion, Thrapston u3a have been invited to join the march to the memorial and lay a wreath as part of the service of remembrance on 8<sup>th</sup> Nov 26. All are welcome to attend and join the march. We will publish further details nearer the time.

On a more uplifting note, this is a great time for new groups. As you will read later in this newsletter, 5 new groups are currently being established, and we plan to propose a new group every month with sign-up sheets at the monthly meetings. We are also running our very first Short Course. The group in Mosaics will last for just six, 2-hour sessions. If you have a great idea for a group, contact our Groups Coordinator Polly Johnson. it doesn't have to run for ever.

I hope to meet as many of you as possible at our next meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> February.

Frank



## Monthly Meeting

20th February & 20th March 26

Doors open at 10:00 am



### *History of Carry on Film*

*20th February Speaker: Steve Dimmer*

We welcome back Steve Dimmer and this month he will tell us all about the history of the Carry On films – Ooh Matron!



### *Sweet FA*

*20th March - Peter Fairweather Will Adams & Julia Burgess:*

Peter and Will began to write together in 1997 when they discovered they shared an unhealthy obsession with puns. Every year since then they have written and appeared in a comedy play or pantomime for the Denford Thespians in East Northants. This led to the formation of 'Sweet F.A.', allowing the duo to write and perform their own comic songs, ably supported by the fabulous musical talents of their resident house band, The Julie Burgess One. As a result they have become famous the length and breadth of Front Street, Denford. They have also toured extensively, to Raunds, Stanwick, Thrapston, Oundle, and even Northampton once.

Sweet F.A. feel that the great tradition of the English comic song is long overdue for a comeback – and the time is now!





## *A North London Childhood*



Bombs, blackouts, broken homes and broken lives surrounded us when I was born in my Nana's brass bed. She had birthed 9 and then there was me, daughter, to her youngest. Mum & I were with Nana because my Scots Guard dad was fighting overseas. The end of our road had taken a direct hit, so half the Victorian houses were reduced to rubble.

Mum had to work so I was put into a day nursery. The dreaded letter arrived, At 22 my Mum became a widow and Nana took on my care. She took me to her weekly "meetings" which, were held in an old church hall where the ladies sat around gossiping. As I got older, I listened in to their conversations and joined in the hymn singing. My favourite was the one where I learned that Jesus (whoever he was) wanted me for a sunbeam. We did everything together, so it was really hard when at the age of 4 mum got married again and we moved into a rented flat, still in Tottenham and a new school. I didn't like my new dad - he didn't smile much, was strict and a bit too handy with his fist and belt. I really missed my Nana, but I wasn't allowed to cry. So, I made new friends at school, played in the streets and parks and kept out of the way.

Money was tight . Mainly because they were determined to buy a place of their own . When I was 6 we moved to Edmonton. The road comprised of Victorian 2 up 2 downs and at the end was a bombed-out greyhound racing stadium. The house was a modern 3 bed in a terrace of 4 built in the gap abutting the original stadium gateway. There was a high wall against which we kids played cricket, rounders, did handstands, skipped - the games were endless. Best of all was the stadium known by everyone as "The Dogs" with its own watchman who gave chase on a daily basis to us marauding kids. There were crumbling grandstands, old toilet blocks, piles of rubble to make dens and best of all a stream running along the back - perfect for swinging over, building steppingstones and generally getting very wet. It was a kid's paradise. No need to go home as there was always so much to do. My sister arrived later that year meaning mum was now at home during the day. I wasn't allowed to invite friends in but other mums weren't as strict so on cold days there was always somewhere to go. Doing the shopping, cleaning shoes, polishing the doorstep and the dusting even the top of the door.

My stepdad didn't chat but he was brilliant at making things, When I got 4 pram wheels he made me a go-cart with a box on the back for my sister to ride in. That bit didn't happen because I had other ideas. I took the go-cart and stand on the corner of Edmonton Green market and offer to help the old ladies carry their shopping home. I got lots of work and was always given 1p or 2p and earned enough so I could go to Saturday morning pictures. From then on it was work Saturday afternoons to get money for next week

The organist played Anchors Away, Tipperary, pack up your Troubles and we kids raised the roof with our singing until the lights dimmed and the films started. Tom Mix, Roy Rogers, Zorro, Flash Gordon etc. lit up the screen transporting us kids into a world we kids had never dreamed of, When it was all over us we exploded out of the doors like a swarm of angry bees, galloping along on imaginary horses, wearing our coats round our necks like a cape and slashing at everything with imaginary swords depending upon which hero we had been watching. The wait for next week was almost unbearable - would our hero be buried in a cave, fall over a cliff, get shot by firing squad? We HAD to go next week to find out. It was exciting when we had torrential rain because our street flooded, so out would come the tin baths turning our road into a mini-Armada. Boys against the girls to see who could sink each other's ships.



## A North London Childhood –Contd

There was a papermill behind the market so I would knock on doors for miles around asking for old newspapers & when the go-cart was fully loaded, would take it to be weighed earning good money that way. Couldn't push your luck by going too often but about once a month was ok. It was the same with jam jars and beer bottles - off licenses and shops paid to have these returned. Following a horse & cart & collecting manure earned 6p per bucket. Visiting Nana who lived near White Lane, when Spurs played at home was also quite lucrative. Not many people owned a car so a child offering to "mind" it whilst the match was on was worth paying for. When he came back the idea was to possessively lean over the bonnet patting it and saying how no-one had been allowed near it and I always got at least 2p. You had at least 3 cars to mind and only turned up once the match was over with your hand out. There was no excuse to be really poor in London. You just had to work out how not to be.

Every classroom had a fire and there was always a huge pile of coke outside. We didn't feel cold because we only had a coal fire at home. We wore wellies if it rained, changing into black plimsols, sandals in the summer. A smog was called a peasouper, and you really couldn't see your own hands it was that bad. We covered our mouths and noses with a scarf and felt our way along walls and hedges to get to school. No one in those days had a day off, unlike today when schools close at the first sign of snow. We couldn't wait to make the first really long slide that went from one side of the playground to the other - shining like glass, we buffed it up and kept it clear of new snow and threw ourselves headlong into the exhilarating ride, over and over again. We were so sad when it melted.

When my sister Julie was 3 (I was 9) she was enrolled in the nursery class, so it was my job to take her to and collect her after school. In the winter I had to light the fire and get tea ready. We had school dinners, so it was just bread & jam and tea. Mum had been teaching me to darn, knit and sew which I loved and spent hours making dolls clothes for Julie, letting down hems, sewed buttons & repaired my clothes. I liked it better than cleaning. In better weather we took off over the "Dogs" and played out until bedtime. A lot of us kids were latchkey kids and it was normal for us older ones to mind the little ones, so minding Julie was ok most of the time and really, I became her mum as it meant that mum could go to work during school holidays as well. I had her all day except when I was "working" at weekends.

I found an old, busted bike which dad fixed up for me so then I could go a lot further afield - Julie sat on the saddle whilst I pedalled and we could go to different parks and the Lido. One evening an elderly neighbour asked me if I could take his washing to his daughter who lived 2 miles away. With a big bag hanging from each handlebar I set off. His daughter gave me a freshly washed & ironed load plus 6p for my trouble. When I got back, he also gave me 6p so from then on this became a regular fortnightly commitment and this all helped with my plan to run away. I had been saving into the post office for years and think I had consoled myself with thoughts of joining a circus or some other stupid idea, no doubt brought on by too much Enid Blyton. Obviously, it didn't happen as over the years I had learned to be very self-sufficient and kept clear of swinging belts as best I could.

It sounds as though my parents were pretty awful and when I was a kid I thought so too. However, when I grew up with a family of my own I began to see that it wasn't really their fault. Dad was a Changi POW enduring brutality & starvation beyond comprehension and mum a widow at a very young age, so they weren't the best people to care for young children. I once asked my sister why she never got hit and she said that she had watched what was happening to me and kept her head down.... *Clever girl*. Looking back, I think I had an amazing childhood- able to do more or less what I wanted, learned resilience and a strong work ethic that has stood me well all my life...**Kelly Wickham**



## *Lincoln Noel plays Thrapston Plaza – Oooohh*

### *16th January*

You only understand the “Oooohh” if you were there!

This month we listened to the piano maestro Lincoln Noel. This larger-than-life and very likeable character was born in Duston, Northampton, from Caribbean parents (dad from Grenada, Mum from Barbados). He has his own classic style of storytelling style intermingled with his piano playing and song. It was a lovely, entertaining morning, with audience participation.

Lincoln grew up in Northamptonshire and went to the Royal Academy of Music, he excelled at piano and wanted to play, but then aged 7 he met Yehudi Menuhin and saw him in orchestra he was inspired to learn the violin so he could experience being part of an orchestra.

When he first went to play at the Royal Albert Hall, his dad told him to dress smart and ensure his tie was straight. His dad knew he would be interviewed as at the time, he was the only black member of the orchestra, sure enough, there was a lot of interest in Lincoln Noel. Relatively young he was in awe of his interviewers, a particular favourite of his was the Radio 4's Janice Long and the BBC's Trisha Ingram, he even made the News at Ten!

Lincoln is now practiced in all things keyboard, including jazz, and plays many weddings, He is currently booked to play at Stanwick Lakes, plus I am sure we will be seeing and hearing Lincoln again very soon at Thrapston u3a!



Review by Helen Dawson: Speaker Seeker and Facebook

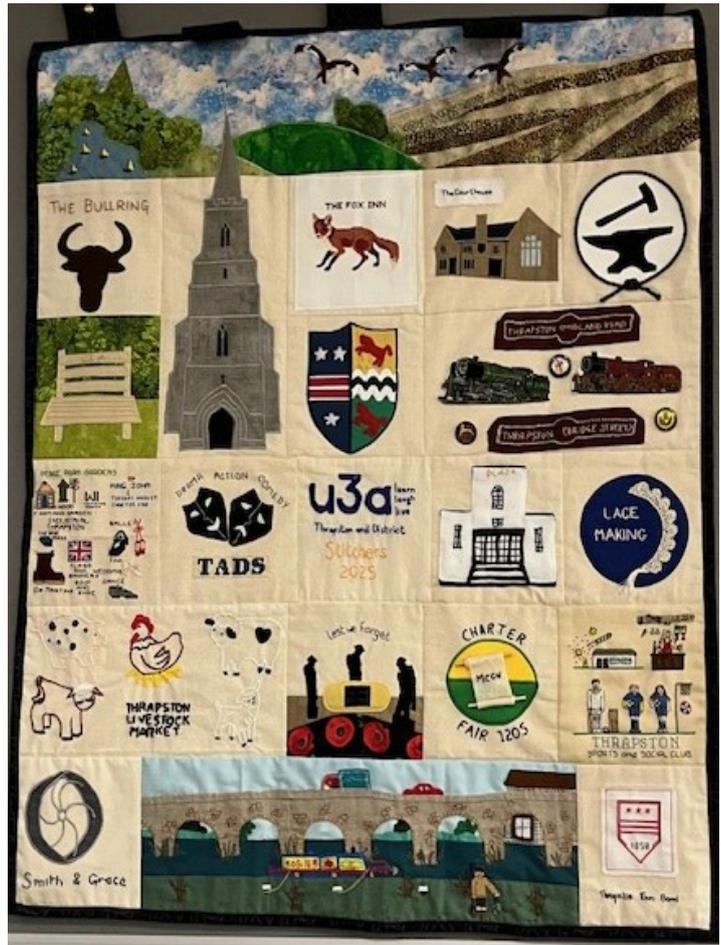
## Stitchers Group Project

The Stitchers Group have been working on a project together over the past year and it has finally been finished.

The theme for the wall hanging is “Thrapston” and depicts the town’s history and iconic buildings.

It illustrates a number of different skills – including cross stitch, applique, embroidery, patchwork.

The group meets at the Library on the last Wednesday of the month (10.30 to 12) and the wall hanging is destined for the new room there.



## Group News



### Line Dancing

Change of venue from the beginning of March

They will be meeting in St James Church Hall

### Current Issues

There is still a sheet out at the monthly meeting if you wish to sign up for the Current Issues group.

Gardening group, confirmation that they meet on Wednesday.

Polly Johnson [groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

## Butterfly & Birdwatching report Barnwell Country park 14<sup>th</sup> January

The Venue was Barnwell Country Park, a lovely and well maintained park of 37 acres with woodland, lakes, river and shrubland areas which are ideal for many species of birds. The sun was shining on arrival at the park, a lovely morning after days of grey skies and wet weather, after meeting up we headed across the car park to Mill lake, which was still mostly frozen over.

A couple of Blue tits were busy in the trees looking for insects and a small flock of beautiful yellow and green Siskins were high up in an Alder tree also looking for food, a little Chiff Chaff was also seen. As we walked on a Robin appeared and a Blackbird was turning over leaves in the search for worms.



Frozen lake



Male Siskin



Female Siskin



Chiff Chaff

We reached the path by the lake and in the small pond on the other side of the path a pair of Mallards were feeding on the pond weed, there was a disturbance at the back of the pond as a Water Rail appeared, this is a very shy wading bird and the first one most of us had ever seen, after a minute or so it disappeared back into the undergrowth and was gone.



Water Rail



Chaffinch



Black Headed Gulls



Long Tailed Tit

We carried on by the lake towards the first bird hide, all was quiet except for a lonely Swan sitting on the grass by the end of the lake. On arrival at the hide plenty of birds were flying in to take seed that had been scattered in front of the hide, there were Blue and Great tits, Dunnocks, Chaffinches, Robins and a Nuthatch, a rat also made an appearance darting back and forth picking up seed. After a while we carried on along the path by the river towards the North lake.

Along the way some Long Tailed tits were spotted high in the trees, they were difficult to photograph as they never keep still, flying from branch to branch, we moved on and reached the bridge on the North lake and plenty of Mallards, Coots and Swans were congregated in ice free water around the bridge. We arrived at the Kingfisher bird hide overlooking the frozen lake but nothing to be seen except a hungry Squirrel that climbed onto the windowsill to take bird seed.



It was nearly midday and time for a cup of tea and a sausage roll from the Kingfisher cafe before heading home, it was an enjoyable walk and thanks to everyone who came and also to Steph, Colin and both Paul's for the photos. ....Bob Simpson

## MEMBER'S SURVEY/ POTENTIAL NEW ACTIVITY GROUPS

Firstly, many thanks to those of you who completed the Member's survey for us at the end of last year. We received a substantial amount of useful information to help us with future planning including how you heard about our u3a, what is of most importance to you, what we do well, what we can improve on and ideas for extra social activities

The committee has been gradually working through your feedback and one of our first priorities is to extend the number of activity groups from the present 32, as, although we received extremely positive feedback about the groups as a whole, there is frustration in groups being full, particularly for new members.

We received twenty-eight suggestions for new groups and as Groups Coordinator and Publicity Officer we have met and we have devised a strategy for introducing initially five new groups.

We already have four groups in their early stages and we propose to introduce one further group each month. There will be an 'Expressions of Interest' sheet for each group at the monthly meetings and members can either sign up then or email the group coordinator to place their name on the list. Once we have at least six signees, an inaugural meeting will be organized when the format, venue and hopefully group leadership can be decided. You may sign up at any time prior to the group launch month. [Groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:Groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

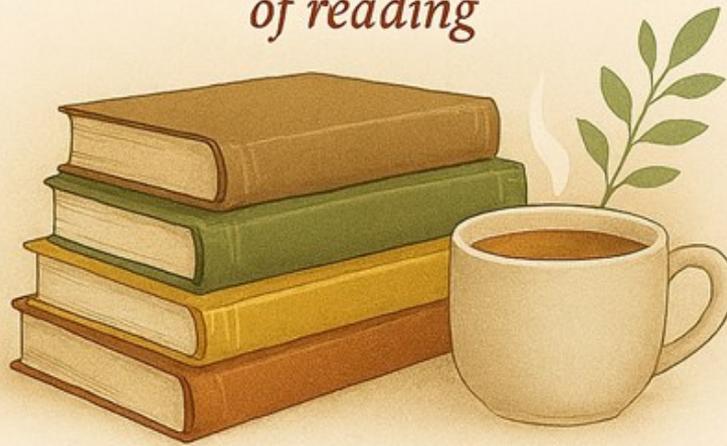
Please let us know if you have more ideas for groups, especially if you'd be willing to lead a group. Remember that you don't have to be an expert, just willing to organize and learn alongside your group members. Here is our proposed timetable:

Polly and Glyn

Month	Group	Group Leader (if known)
December/January	Book Group	Theresa Hunt
	Mosaics (short course)	Elaine Scott
	Golf	Dave Tolmie
	Line Dancing	Sue Pringle
	Current Issues	Peter Baden/ Glyn Hill
February	Art appreciation Sunday Lunches	
March	History Walks	Glyn Hill/ Eric Franklin
April	Action group (e.g. go-karting, zip wiring, narrow boat trips, canoeing)	
May	Poetry	
June	Cookery/ luncheons	
July	Dancing (ballroom?)	
September	Angling	
October	IT skills	
November	Folk Singing	

# U3A BOOK CLUB

*Conversation, connection, and the joy  
of reading*



## When

4th Friday of the month at 10am  
Next meeting: 27th March

## Where

Berry's Café, The Bullring, Thrapston

## This Month's Book

*The Island of Missing Trees*  
by Elif Shafak

All welcome – whether you've finished the book  
or simply enjoy good company.

Contact Theresa Wood .., [theresawood634@gmail.com](mailto:theresawood634@gmail.com)  
or 07976969539



## Thrapston Mayor's Quiz & Chips – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Many u3a members will already be aware that two or three times each year Thrapston Town Council's little elves fill the Plaza on a Saturday evening with hopeful contestants no so much intent on winning the top prize but more wishing to avoid gaining the toilet rolls 'Booby' prize for the least number of points.

The format for the evening is pretty much the same each time with tables accommodating the individually named team of between 4 – 6 people. Each team declares its name before the contest starts. Our u3a entered three teams of six contestants, u3a Rollers, u3a All Stars and u3a Chancers.

Each table has identical question papers at the very start, 8 No subject specific sheets for the eight main rounds of the contest, such things as 'Food & Drink' and 'Who Am I' when it is hoped that individuals from history can be identified from clues given out by the Quiz Master. Each team had a Joker to play which doubled the points they scored in a particular round.

In addition, each team had two other sheets of posers to be solved throughout the evening apart from the Quiz questions. On this occasion one sheet was named the 1% Club with mostly mathematical problems to be solved, and a sheet of pictures from TV adverts where we were challenged to identify the products being advertised from the sheet of coloured pictures. Definitely quite a memory test.

I had provisionally booked 12 tickets for our u3a and these were quickly taken up but suddenly I needed more so trotted along to the Town Council Office only to be told "Sorry but we have no more tables". Never being one to take No for an answer I asked how would it be if I provided a table? My offer was accepted and through the good offices of our Library I was able to provide the extra table and the panic was over.

To complicate matters further, popular songs were played at the start of each round with the object of identifying the artist, the song title and year it was released. The resulting answers to be added onto each question sheet and finally we had to try and determine the relationship of all the songs to each other all to be added onto the points tally. After each round the completed question papers were exchanged with neighbouring tables for marking.

A bar offered liquid sustenance with both alcoholic and soft drinks providing mental stimulation and at the halfway point tasty Fish & Chips were served as boxed meals to everyone. Not necessarily 'Brain Food' but nonetheless welcome.

I have heard it said that "It's not the winning but the taking part that matters". And it seems that this may often be the 'losers' excuse. However, on this occasion you will be pleased to learn that one of our u3a teams showed our consistency carrying off a prize. Whereas we didn't wipe the floor with the opposition we could at least wipe something with our prize!

Paul Ollett



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

### **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](mailto:editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

Website : [www.thrapstonu3a.co.uk](http://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*