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### Chairman's March Message



I am always amazed at the resourceful and dedication of our members who give their time and talents to make what we do a very pleasant experience. Nowhere else is this better demonstrated than at our monthly Plaza meetings when it is all 'shoulders to the wheel'. I would not risk listing all the various tasks that are voluntarily undertaken for fear of leaving something out but all who help in any way are worthy of our hearty and sincere gratitude.

It is rewarding to see our membership numbers showing a steady increase and I am aware that there is a possibility of some new groups starting up, of course assistance is readily available for anyone embarking on establishing a new interest group.

Tony Bonham was our February speaker and we could follow his progress on an adventure trek in Morocco. More on this elsewhere in this Newsletter, it is a fascinating tale. Tony kindly donated a copy of his book 'Stumbling Over Eden' to be used as a prize in our fund-raising probably at the Charter Fair in June.

I apologise for the cramped conditions at the Plaza due to us sharing the venue with Thrapston Operatic Society. I was advised that the stage extensions were being deployed and would be set up but this does not normally cause us a problem. What we were not prepared for was the orchestra pit occupying the free space at the front of the auditorium. Added to our problems was the non-operation of the hearing loop. Well, we managed and thank you for your understanding.

I hope that you 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 new committee, hopefully to see our u3a safely into the new year. There is still time for you to join the team and make an impact with your own ideas.

As the season progresses, the days are getting longer and we even have had some milder weather. There are lots more Snowdrops evident this year, what a delight to the eye and a feeling of joy they bring. Mother Nature waits for nobody; there's not a moment to waste. Enjoy the early flowers of Spring and take full advantage of everything our u3a has to offer, "live, laugh & learn". **Paul**



## Monthly Meetings

21 March 2025 & 18 April 2025

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



### *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.



### *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.

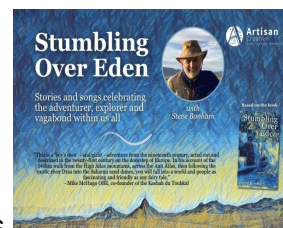
As well as talking entertainingly about his experiences while researching and writing the book, Nick also performs some of his own live music on Harp and Handpan to accompany birdsong recordings he has made.





## Stumbling over Eden

21st February: Speaker Steve Bonham



Thrapston U3A members, guests and visitors all met this Friday in the Plaza to hear our latest speaker. Steve Bonham, who walked around 540km from the Atlas Mountains along towards the town of M'hommid, just where the sand dunes begin on the edge of the Sahara Desert.

With such altitudes, the trip had to incorporate getting used to low oxygen levels. Having to stop for a few hours around midday due to the heat. Being aware of carrying food, again due to heat and potential spoiling. Steve did his research into potential hazards such as feral dogs, busy roads and even maybe getting arrested!

He had to find and engage a guide, plus two mules with handlers for their provisions, these mules were then swapped for a camel and handler later in the trip as terrain changed from mountainous to the sand of the desert. As they were ready to begin their journey, they were joined by a stray dog, they named Black. This calm soul seemed to guide and protect them throughout the most treacherous parts of the trip.

This '*not your typical adventurer*' planned and executed a three week-long adventure, learning more about himself along the way.

### **What is an adventure?**

***Doing something when you're not sure what may happen next.***

Listening to Steve talk about his trek, the friends he made of his guide and mule handlers, plus Black the dog who guided them through the most difficult terrain it was easy to become excited to plan such a trip oneself.



One of his slides described different types of quests, showing everyone in the room that they too could become an adventurer...

Dip your Toe in the Water – If you're new to travel, adventure or maybe feel a little nervous of embarking on something quite so grandiose, then why not book a holiday but do some planned trips, either where the travel company take you on a trip to see local life, or most hotels have local guides they know that you can hire for the day if you want to get off the beaten track and explore a little further afield in relative safety.

Or there's Complete Beasting, as he called it, the opposite end to the spectrum, where you book the aeroplane, put on the parachute then jump out over the Grand Canyon, not for everyone!

Why not try something in the middle, embrace the unexpected and find those hidden delights, whether in the UK or further afield. Adventure keeps us vital, alive and motivated! Remember, you don't necessarily know what the ending will be, find where you will spend the night as you go along, don't prebook. Eat with locals and find their delicacies... who knows what you will discover.

You can read the story of Black at [www.thespiritdog.life](http://www.thespiritdog.life)

If you'd like to recount an adventure you've had, big or small, the U3A newsletter would LOVE to hear from you! Get in touch and tell us your story.

Review by Helen Dawson

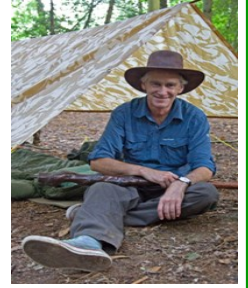






## This Months Story: Keith Williams — Fox's Tale

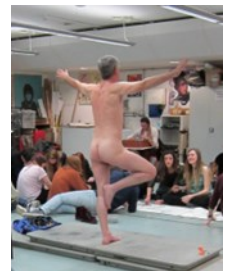
Starting at the end, I'm sure many of you have seen me wearing my Fox painted waistcoat. I like to be known as Fox and was for several years. How did I acquire this name? It goes back to the consequences of my high stress career in IT.



I left school at 17 with A levels straight into a civil service programming job with Customs and Excise. A short lived first marriage was followed by a 25 year second marriage producing four sons. During this time I managed to get made redundant four times, ending up working for NatWest bank, commuting to London.

Cue NatWest being taken over by Royal Bank of Scotland and all the computer systems having to be unified on a political rather than practical timeframe. Combine this with a marriage not going well, my Father dying with Parkinson's I had clinical depression or, as I'd call it, a nervous breakdown.

Escaping the black dog needed over a year of psychotherapy; I supplemented that with various therapeutic activities. Hard exercise with a military fitness class activated the endorphins. I ventured into art classes as a life model; body positive, meditation and genuine thanks from the artists - this morphed into a near full time job after voluntary early retirement at 53.



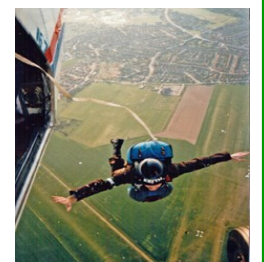
Lastly and most pertinently I took a couple of bushcraft courses which gave the opportunity to return as a helper. I spent many long weekends over 5 years helping with the courses and living in woodland. During this time I had some weird experiences with the shamanic based spiritual activities - they logically were impossible, finding trees you'd met while blindfolded; identifying plants just by holding a minute sample; finding hidden tracks by 'dowsing' for them.

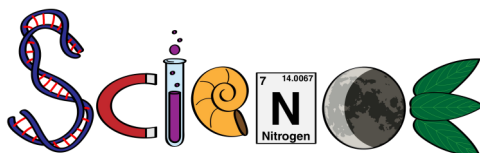
So, a decade out of psychotherapy but still struggling, my then wife, who had never really come to terms with my depression, made yet another fairly innocuous negative remark and something seemed to physically move in my mind...My first words were 'I want a divorce'...

The next bushcraft course was all debated and discussed. That apparently physical change in my mind signalled the end of the depression. With the support of my shamanist friends I opted to leave the damaged identity that was Keith behind and adopted the name Fox. I'd made friends with the urban foxes that visited our Essex garden and had several positive encounters with foxes in the woods during the bushcraft weekends. I disappeared and reappeared at night 'like a fox' so my ally animal became my identity.



So, Fox I was, Divorced I was, and a move from Essex to Thrapston (via Stanwick) started the next chapter. Meeting my wife and fully retiring has changed my life so much for the better. - What comes next for the tale of my life? Other formative life experiences; 6 years in the Territorial Army; Parachute jump (I'm acrophobic); Racing in RACMSA kart meets; Having kids and now grandkids; Ballroom dancing at Blackpool Tower; Motorcycling, which I've just recommenced; and of course the U3A!





## Science and Technology

### Visit to Loughborough Bell Foundry - 19th May 2025

This visit has been organised by the Science and Technology group but we are opening it up to a wider U3a audience as we are sure it will appeal.

The tour starts at 1.30 and will last an hour and a half. The cost is £17.50 (concession). We intend to travel independently and will be organising car shares leaving Thrapston at 12 noon to allow plenty of time to get there.

All interested parties, including Sci and Tech members who have already given me their names, will need to send names, contact details (email and/or phone) to [sheilaguilford@gmail.com](mailto:sheilaguilford@gmail.com) stating whether they wish to drive themselves, drive a car share or be a passenger within a car share. Once I have the list (max size for the tour is 35), I will get back to the Foundry to see if they want our payments in advance or on the day.

I will be at the Plaza meeting on 21st March to finalise details and add people should there still be space.

Sheila Guilford

## Back to the Future 2 - The Sequel.

In January's Newsletter I wrote about the origin of Thrapston & District u3a back in 2012 and its many successes up to the present day. However, I also pointed out that its future is dependent on new volunteers stepping up and joining the committee. We have had some success, though once again, the existing committee members are having to shuffle round or cancel stepping down to fill essential roles.

We still need a minimum of a Groups Co-ordinator (GC) to take over the role in May. We all attend various groups; they are the basis of the u3a and their leaders are the most important people in the organisation. The role of GC is not onerous and only requires a commitment of a few hours per month, but it is vitally important to the continuing success of our u3a. You can read the full job description on our website under "Useful Information" at the bottom of the Home Page and you can contact the current GC - Roger Davies - for further information. Full training will be given.

Before you push this request to the back of your mind and move on to the next article in this Newsletter, please stop and ask yourself "Why should I **not** volunteer to be the GC or any other position on the committee?". *When we join an organisation run by its members, we must accept that at some point we all have to do our bit. If you think you can help, please contact one of the following:*

Roger Davies: [groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:groupsthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

Paul Ollett: [chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

Frank Boydell: [vicechair2thrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:vicechair2thrapstonu3a@gmail.com)





## Thrapston u3a Motorcycle Group

Have you ever felt the exhilarating freedom of riding a motorcycle on an open road, the wind rushing past, the sense of adventure igniting your spirit?

I'm proposing starting a u3a Motorcycle Group.

I know that within our u3a there are a few of us who ride motorcycles for pleasure. Some belong to motorcycle groups, whilst other simply ride alone when the sun comes out and it stops raining. So why a u3a Motorcycling Group?

**Camaraderie and mutual support:** Sharing tips on bike maintenance, sharing tools and equipment.

**Adventure:** Exploring new places with fellow enthusiasts. What's your favourite ride?

**Safety:** Riding in a group can be safer than riding alone. The collective visibility and the support system in case of breakdowns or emergencies provide an added layer of safety.

**Events and Activities:** An opportunity to join organized events such as charity rides, bike shows, and social gatherings.

### Who's invited?

Everyone. Whether you're an on-road or an off-road rider all would be welcome. Ladies get your helmet on. Pillion riders – let's make it a family affair.

### Purpose.

Initially to simply enjoy group rides, but the direction of the group would be decided by the members.

### How often would we meet?

Again, this would be decided by the members, but at least monthly throughout the spring/summer/autumn.

### Initial Meetings and Rides

If there is sufficient interest, we could start by organizing a few informal meetings and rides to gauge interest and discuss the group's vision, goals, and rules.

### 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 riders than me. However, I would envisage everyone in the group contributing to planning rides and running the group.

### Interested?

Contact: Frank Boydell on [vicechair2thrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:vicechair2thrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

Or phone me on 07928 747840.





## Butterfly & Birdwatching report 5<sup>th</sup> February

The outing on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February was to Stanwick Lakes and on arrival we were greeted with sunshine and 4 degrees temperature, although a little chilly it was lovely conditions for a winters birdwatching walk. The park was quite busy at 10.30, with dog walkers and others out enjoying the sunny weather.



Our group of seven set off towards Kingfisher Bridge and the bird hides beyond, in the lake behind the barbecue area a male Goosander was spotted on the water with its distinct brown and white plumage, great to see as it is not a common bird in this area, as we carried on along the path a few Blackbirds and a robin were seen amongst the trees.



We arrived at Kingfisher bridge normally a good site to see a Heron perched amongst the reeds or a Grey Wagtail by the water and Siskins foraging in the Alder trees, all was quiet. Although its named Kingfisher bridge we have yet to see one of these elusive little birds there, maybe next time.

A short walk the bird hide and on the way a lovely little Wren was darting between the bushes but no chance of a photograph. At the hide the feeders were busy with Great tits, Blue tits and a family of beautiful Long Tailed tits, always a treat to see. There were also Robins, Blackbirds and a Moorhen to be seen. A gang of Five Squirrels busy eating spilt seed from the feeders and it was magical to see a lovely little Muntjac deer gradually approaching the hide in search of food.

After a while we left and headed over to the bird hide overlooking the lake but apart from a pair of swans and a group of Moorhens in the distance nothing else was to be seen. We vacated the hide and headed down the path along the river.

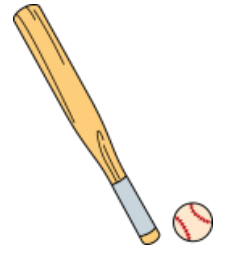
It was all quiet on the riverbank apart from a Crow looking for a snack, across the river there was a Great White Egret fishing in the shallows of the lake, a few Tufted ducks and a male and female Goosander were on the main lake with a flock of Greylag and Canadian geese feeding amongst the grass at the lakeside.

By now it was 11.50 and time to head back for coffee and a hot sausage roll at the visitor centre before heading back to Thrapston. It was another enjoyable walk with great company and looking forward to our next outing at the beginning of March. Also many thanks to Colin for his photo contribution.



Contact me on 07904377258 if you are interested in joining our group. Bob Simpson

## Just an Idea - Rounders !!!!!!!



How we are looking forward to a warm Spring and long summer evenings. It is a pleasure to be outside on an evening in June and too good an opportunity to miss.

I have cherished memories of such times when as children, we visited the local playing field with no other apparatus than a football and having thrown our jackets on the ground to make goals we spent what seemed like hours running around until it got dark having uncluttered fun with each other. Where are those village lads now I wonder?

At the recent Coffee morning the talk at one table turned to the game of Rounders and if my memory serves me correctly, I believe it can be played at all levels and intensities sometimes with bitter rivalry. However, it can also be played on the beach with less emphasis on winning than there is in having fun.

The Table Tennis groups show that there is a considerable number of members who are nimble on their feet and whatever we do will not be too demanding.

Maybe most of us are not as swift as once we were but if there is enough interest, and you really know that you want to get involved. I propose that we have a social games evening to have fun, not tearing up trees in the process with a provisional date of Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June.

See me to get signed up and looking forward to a great event.

Paul Ollett [chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)



## Free Mature Drivers Roadshow

7 May 2025

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. Free advice will be available on car adaptations, eyesight, how your prescription medications may affect you, and much more.

There will be Free IAM RoadSmart Mature Driver Assessments available to book.

**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 Holiday Inn Corby, A43, Geddington Road, Corby, Northamptonshire, NN18 8ET (what3words.com/soaks.tamed.flag) with two sessions, 9.30am and 1.00pm.



# MARCH

*I shake the cities with my hurricanes ;  
I flood the rivers and their banks efface ,  
And drown the farms and hamlets with my rains .*

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

**Birth Flowers** – Daffodil or Jonquil

**Birthstone** – Aquamarine

**Zodiac Signs** – Pisces , Aries

March takes its name from Mars , the god of war . In the early Roman Calendar it was the first month of the year .

Lide , an early name for March is derived from Hlyda which probably referred to the loudness of the wind in this month !

The Anglo Saxons named it Lenetmonath which refers to the lengthening of the days during the month and is also related to the words Lenten and Lent .

## **Significant dates**

1<sup>st</sup> St. Davids Day

8<sup>th</sup> International Women's Day

17<sup>th</sup> St. Patricks Day



## **\*\*\*\*\* Move & Groove Update \*\*\*\*\***

Please note that I cannot resume my classes until April .  
If you need to contact me please phone me on 07931 712056.

**Janet**

## **Change of deadline for Articles to be included in April's Newsletter**

Can you please send any articles for the April's Newsletter to reach me by the 21st March 2025 at the latest to ensure they are included. Thank you

Tina [editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com](mailto:editorthrapstonu3a@gmail.com)

**GROUPS, December 2024**

| <b>WHAT</b>               | <b>WHO</b>           | <b>WHERE</b>          | <b>WHEN</b>   |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| rt                        | Annie Thantrey       | Thrapston Library     | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wed am            |
| Board Games               | Ken Broadhurst       | Thrapston Library     | Alt Wednesdays 2-4pm                                |
| Bridge                    | Gordon Campbell      | Member's home         | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thur, 1.45 – 3.45                   |
| Butterfly & Bird watching | Robert Simpson       | Various               | 1 <sup>st</sup> Wed 10-12.00                        |
| Cake & Bake               | Viv Tunstall         | Member's home         | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Fri, 2-4pm                          |
| Canasta                   | Jean Mole            | Member's home         | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thurs am          |
| Creative Writing          | David Green          | Member's home         | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wed, 2 – 4                          |
| Cycling                   | Frank Boydell        | From Co-op car park   | Mondays 10am  |
| Desert Island Discs       | Glynis Hill          | Member's home         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wed, 2 – 4                          |
| English                   | Glyn James           | Member's home         | 1 <sup>st</sup> Wed, pm                             |
| Family History            | Mandy Dawkins        | Member's home         | 1 <sup>st</sup> Fri 10.30 – 12.30                   |
| Flower Bunch              | Linda Vickerman      | Cole Court, Raunds    | Last Fri, am  |
| French Encore             | Jan Pacey            | Thrapston Library     | 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thur, 10.15-12.15 |
| French Revivers           | Roger Davies         | Member's home         | 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Wed, 2-4          |
| Gardening                 | Angela Gyves         | various               | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday 10.30                     |
| Local History             | Eric Franklin        | Member's home         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues, 2pm                           |
| Lunches                   | Jean Mole            | Various               | 3rd Wed   |
| Makin' Music              | Marion Healey        | Baptist Church        | Wed 10.15 – 12.15                                   |
| Move & Groove             | Janet Oldham         | Islip Village Hall    | Mondays 10.30 to 11.30                              |
| Nordic Short Walks        | Pauline Johnson      | Various               | Tuesdays 2pm  |
| Photography               | Neil Underwood       | Thrapston Library     | 1 <sup>st</sup> Mon 10.30 – 12.00                   |
| Science & Technology      | S Underwood/Phil Cox | Baptist Church Lounge | 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mon, 2-4                            |
| Singing for Fun           | Marion Healey        | Baptist Church        | 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Fri 1.30 – 3.00   |
| Stitchers                 | Wendy Davies         | Thrapston Library     | Last Wed 10.30 – 12                                 |
| Table Tennis 1            | Gordon Campbell      | Baptist Church        | Tuesdays 9.45 – 11.00                               |
| Table Tennis 2            | Gordon Campbell      | Baptist Church        | Thursdays, 9.45 – 11.00                             |
| Tai Chi                   | Linda Vickerman      | Islip Village Hall    | Thursdays, 2.00 – 3.30                              |
| Tai Chi Beginners/Sabre   | Colin Northern       | Islip Village Hall    | Tuesdays, 2.30 – 4.00                               |
| Ten Pin Bowling           | Margaret Beston      | Wellingborough        | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Fri, 11.00                          |
| Ukulele                   | Marion Healey        | Member's home         | 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Tues, 10.30       |
| Wellbeing with Nature     | Susan Collini        | Sudborough            | Wednesdays, am                                      |



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                       | <a href="mailto:chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com">chairmanthrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>         |
| Vice Chair: Frank Boydell                | <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: Roger Davies        | <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: Frank Boydell            | <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 & Facebook: Glyn Hill          | <a href="mailto:publicity1thrapstonu3a@gmail.com">publicity1thrapstonu3a@gmail.com</a>     |
| Plaza Welcome Manager: Kelly Wickham     | <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>                   |

### ***Off Committee Role 2024/2025***

Access Advisor: Glyn Hill [accesssthraptonu3a@gmail.com](mailto: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](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*