u3a Thrapston & District
Learn, Laugh, Live

Newsletter
November 2026



Friendship ✦ Learning ✦ Fun in our Community

Musings from the Chairman



Autumn, "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness". So said John Keats and he certainly knew what he was talking about. I love this time of year. I can see it in the vibrant autumnal colours, the falling leaves and the cooling temperature but I can also feel it in my soul. There is something in the air, almost like magic. A certain something that stirs strong feelings and evokes a sense of nostalgia for me.

It takes me back to my childhood in so many ways: kicking through the fallen leaves – the rustle as they fly up, the smell of damp decay and its ability to hack into powerful, emotive memories that take me back. Collecting conkers, gathering wood for the bonfire. Bonfire night itself, when the whole country appeared to be on fire. The smell of the smoke and fireworks, the freshly baked Parkin and pasties and who can forget the teeth extracting Treacle Toffee.

For this reason, despite the misty mornings and cooling weather that tempt me to stay inside, autumn is one of my favourite times to step outside, awaken my senses and explore. You could explore it too with one of our walking groups or the cycling group, or just someone special.

Enjoy it before winter comes calling.

Frank

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Your ideas, stories & photos make our newsletter – we'd love to hear from you

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Our monthly meetings are held at the Plaza Thrapston, on the third Friday in the month, from 10.00 to 12.00. Doors open at 9.45, and the cost is £1 for members and £3 for visitors, to include refreshments

The History of Wind and Watermills of Northamptonshire

Trevor Stainwright



Trevor Stainwright has spent much of his life researching the fascinating history of windmills and watermills in Northamptonshire, uncovering stories of buildings that once played an important part in everyday country life.
His interest began when he was just ten years old, after exploring a derelict windmill with friends. As he grew older, his curiosity developed into a lifelong passion for discovering where the county's mills once stood and what happened to them.

Northamptonshire has a particularly rich milling history. In the Domesday Book of 1086, no fewer than 168 mills were recorded in the county. Watermills were traditionally built beside rivers and streams, making use of flowing water to turn great wheels and grind corn into flour. The River Nene and its tributaries provided ideal locations for many of these mills.
Windmills offered another source of power, using sails to capture the wind. They became increasingly common from the twelfth century onwards. Different designs developed, including post mills, where the entire wooden building could turn to face the wind, and tower mills, which had a rotating cap.
One particularly interesting Northampton landmark was Marvel's Mill, which became the world's first water-powered cotton-spinning mill in the eighteenth century.
Sadly, changing technology, steam power and eventually electricity brought about the decline of traditional mills. Many were demolished, while others were converted into private homes.
Trevor's research has helped record the remains and preserve memories of these once-important buildings.
He has written a book on Northamptonshire's windmills and continues to share photographs, historical information and discoveries with others who share his enthusiasm.
His work reminds us that these mills were far more than picturesque buildings. They were once essential to the county's economy and everyday life, and their history deserves to be remembered.

Dave Tomlie *Speaker Seeker*

This month's speaker, on November 20th, is Colin Bloor

Ancient Monuments

A photographic tour of the monuments and remains from our ancient past up to and including the Roman period. These are visible pieces of history that have survived and can be enjoyed and valued in the landscape of the UK.



MONTHLY MEETINGS



The Christmas Event 2026

18th December at the Plaza.

Doors open at 10.30

At the November meeting you can book a table for you and your friends.

Your ticket includes entertainment from Lincoln Noel, quizzes, a light lunch, a super raffle, and Christmas Cheer.

All tickets have now been sold.



Sent from Polly on behalf of the Social Group
Email: psjohnson2710@gmail.com

u3a friends

Step back in time with u3a Rewind



u3a Rewind is in full swing, and we've loved hearing your memories of the music, fashions and youth cultures that shaped your younger years. From teddy boys and mods to northern soul and punk, there's so much to look back on and share!

If you haven't joined in yet, there's still plenty of time. Whether you're sharing your own memories, or getting together with your u3a group, download our learning packs to delve into the defining genres and sub-cultures of the twentieth century. Let us know what memories come flooding back!

As John from Shrewsbury u3a remembers:
"Our go to hangout was the Cafe Continental, a coffee bar at the foot of Richmond Hill... there was a jukebox and there was dancing... It was our place, and it was freedom."

Learn about the Lords



To celebrate *UK Parliament Week* (23–29 November), join us for a special online event with members of the House of Lords. We'll also hear from u3a Mathematics and Statistics Subject Adviser Dr David Martin. He'll share his experience of contributing to the Numeracy for Life inquiry and helping to raise u3a's profile in Parliament.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

A Message From The Groups Co-ordinator

A reminder that you don't need to be signed up as a member of the group to join in Rural Walks, Lunches, Sunday Lunches, History Walks, Outings and Visits. Please email the group leader to book a place via the website https://thrapston.u3asite.uk/groups

RURAL WALKS



Just a reminder of the dates for the Rural Walks for the next few months

Friday 27th November

Friday 11th December

Friday 8th January

Going forward from February, we should be able to stay on the 1st Friday of each month.

SUNDAY LUNCHES





As our second outing for the reinstated Sunday lunches we went to The Sondes Arms at Rockingham. There were only a few of us this time but we had a lovely time as you can see from the photo. A few of us did feel the food could have been a bit hotter but saying that it was well cooked and there was a good choice. A few of us did go for a pudding afterwards.

Our next outing in November (22nd) will be to The Fox at Thorpe Waterville, 12 noon. The Fox require us to provide them with our order and a £5 deposit as we are a group over 10. The menu is attached for you to look at.

I will be at the U3A November meeting for those of you who did not see me at Rockingham to give me your meal choice and the deposit. You can contact me either by email (su_mallett@yahoo.co.uk) or mobile (07765 776 551).

There will be no lunch meeting in December so the first one in 2027 will be on 24 January. I am yet to confirm it but we are thinking The Wheatsheaf at Titchmarsh. I will let you all know once I have it confirmed.

Val and I look forward to seeing you at The Fox

Eco friendly products

Hi, I'm Sharon and I am running a short course making Homemade Eco-friendly cleaning products.

I'm passionate about our planet and the protection of the Seas.
Switching to homemade alternatives—using basic pantry staples like distilled white vinegar, baking soda, castile soap, erases these threats.
The best toilet and limescale remover is the one I make and with 6 toilets I am an expert in that department.

Why Going DIY is a Lifeline for Our Oceans:
When we clean our homes, we often forget that our drains are direct pipelines to rivers, estuaries, and ultimately, the ocean. Every chemical we rinse down the sink travels downstream—and the difference between simple, homemade eco-cleaners is night and day for marine life.

The Hidden Cost of Bleach on Marine Ecosystems
Chlorine bleach is a powerful disinfectant, but its strength makes it highly toxic to aquatic organisms.

Chlorine is lethal to fish, crustaceans, algae, and marine microorganisms even at extremely low concentrations. It damages fish gills, impairs reproduction, and strips away protective mucus membranes.

When bleach mixes with organic matter in wastewater treatment systems and natural waterways, it reacts to form Organochlorines (including dioxins and trihalomethanes). These persistent pollutants do not break down easily; they remain in the marine environment for years.

Bioaccumulation: Organochlorines bioaccumulate up the food chain. Tiny plankton absorb them, small fish eat the plankton, and predators like dolphins, seals, and seabirds store high concentrations in their fatty tissues, disrupting their immune and reproductive systems.

Disruption of Ocean Food Webs: Bleach destroys beneficial micro-algae and ocean bacteria—the foundational base of the marine food chain.

The first meeting will be on 21st November at the organiser's home in Thrapston.
If you would like to attend please contact me on 07895 976737 or sharonjsmith266@gmail.com

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Thrapston u3a Gets Crafty

There's never been a better time to be part of Thrapston u3a - especially if you love crafting!

Creativity is flourishing at Thrapston u3a, where members are discovering new skills, sharing ideas and, of course, enjoying plenty of friendship and fun along the way.



Our latest venture is a Junk Journaling short course, an eight-week creative adventure that began three weeks ago. The ladies taking part are already loving it!
Junk journaling is all about transforming everyday materials, papers and embellishments into a unique, personalised journal, complete with pockets, flaps and all sorts of creative surprises.
It's a wonderful way to recycle, experiment and let your imagination run wild.



And there's more to come! Following a generous donation of craft materials, we're busy planning both a Christmas card-making afternoon and a Birthday card-making afternoon. These sessions will give members the opportunity to get creative, make something special for friends and family, and perhaps discover a new hobby along the way.

Editor: See page 8 for details of the Christmas Card Making session!



Whether you're an experienced crafter, enjoy a bit of card making, or simply fancy trying something different, Thrapston u3a offers a warm welcome. You don't need to be an expert or have a craft room full of supplies — just bring your enthusiasm and a willingness to have a go!
With more than 40 groups and activities on offer, Thrapston u3a is all about learning, laughter, friendship and making the most of life.



The next Plaza meeting will have FREE CRAFT ITEMS for you to take away, to allow you to get crafting!

Current Issues



This new group started in September and meets on the second Monday of each month at 2.30 until 4.
We've had four really current issues so far; Prisons, Assisted Dying, what does being British mean? and this week, Artificial Intelligence. Each topic has stimulated lively discussions and for myself, I've learned so much and on occasions, have changed my attitude!

We have ten members but there's room for more. Our next meeting is on January 11th and our topic is 'Fraud'. To book a place please contact me on glynishill06@gmail.com. You will be very welcome.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS



So I know numbers, please email helen@rainbowpr.co.uk to register your interest.

The cost is £3. Make as many as you want with lots of equipment ready to use. All materials are provided.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY GROUP

We are a friendly group that meets to discuss matters of science and technological interest – in a light-hearted and friendly fashion! The emphasis is on finding out "new stuff" whilst not taxing the brain cells too much.

Why not come along and give us a try?
Our next meeting will be on Monday 16th November at 2.00pm in the library meeting room (entry via the back door!).

It is a "Show and Tell" meeting with members bringing an object of scientific or technical interest that we can all discuss.
Visitors are welcome to join us, even if you can't find anything to bring along!.

Any Port in a Storm

Our December meeting will take place on Monday 14th December at 2.00pm, again in the library meeting room. Phil Grace will be giving a talk :

"Any PORT in a Storm!"

This will be followed by a port tasting, mince pies and coffee. This will be a ticketed event, to ensure no one goes short!

There are 20 places available with a cost of £5 for u3a members and £4 for paid up members of the Science and Technology group.

Please contact Sheila (nandsu@hotmail.com) if you would like to book a ticket.

NEW MEMBERS



A very warm welcome to this month's new members:

Wendy Love
Marilyn Glen
Melanie Regan
Rosemary Balcer
Helen Roche
Anne Sauntson



Remembrance Sunday

Thanks to everyone who joined us for the remembrance parade and service on Sunday the 8th. It was so good to see so many of our u3a turning out to remember the fallen and to show our support for, and mark our place within, the Thrapston Town Community.

And what an amazing turnout there was from the town. It was standing room only at the back of the church, with every seat in both in the nave and in the upstairs balcony filled. It brought home what a special place we live in.

If you would like to view our wreath, it is to the left of the altar in St James church, though may be transferred to the memorial for Wednesday's short event.

Frank







A Special Offer for Autumn



Autumn Fertiliser for U3A members' gardens and allotments.

Well rotted stable manure. No charge ! Fill your own bags or trailer.

Phone John Percy 01832 720130

(Aldwincle. -- 3 miles from Thrapston)

MEET THE COMMITTEE

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A note from the Editor

This newsletter is published on behalf of the committee of the Thrapston and District U3A. The opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Editor, or of the committee of the Thrapston and District U3A, or of the U3A Trust.

Please note that items for inclusion in the next newsletter should reach the Editor by the last day of the month

Editor and publisher : Wendy Davies - 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