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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

First of all, my apologies that last month's message was rather serious, full of unfamiliar names and possibly irrelevant information. My husband, who always checks my messages, was not at all complimentary about it! However, I did feel it was my job to keep you up to date with what u3a is up to, locally and nationally.

Thank you to all those who attended our May monthly meeting, which should have started with our AGM. Unfortunately, we did not reach the magic number of 59 Members, the number required for the meeting to be quorate (10% of membership), so the AGM will be now held at the start of the June meeting – regardless of the number attending, as permitted by our Constitution.

Even though the AGM did not happen, we still went ahead with a presentation to Barbara Ding for all she has done as our Treasurer for the past nine years. Her attention to detail, her thoroughness and her sense of fun will be much missed by us all. She has brought our finances into the 21st century and kept us on a sure financial footing. We are pleased – and relieved! – that David Tinsley will be joining the Committee as our new Treasurer and we look forward to working with him.

With any sort of change, there is bound to be a period of transition but that gives an opportunity for new ideas and collaborations and can be an exciting time. To give an example, Shakespeare Group 4, of which I am a member, had reduced in numbers to just three of us, which certainly wasn't viable, so we have joined with Group 2. We have only met as a combined Group twice so far, and with different members present, so it will take us some months to get to know each other and find a way forward that suits us all, since the focus in the two groups had been slightly different. However, we have made an excellent start and are enjoying our discussions about the Bard with different people.

If your Group has recently undergone changes, do let us know via the Newsletter, as this is our main way of communicating with the rest of our Members. Also, if you are going on any visits during the summer, please do a write-up and take some photos, both for the Newsletter and for our Archive, which Jane Fenton, who is in charge of Publicity on the Committee, is now keeping up to date.

I hope to see you at the June monthly meeting and we promise a short AGM!

Gill

NEWSLETTER EDITORS: oundleu3newslettereditors@gmail.com Please send us your articles as early as you can.

NEWSLETTER for Oundle & District

Edition Number 200 June 2025

If you would like to find out more about Oundle & District u3a, take a look at <https://oundleanddistrict.u3asite.uk> or contact Chairman: oundleu3chairman@gmail.com Membership Secretary: oundleu3membership@gmail.com Website Manager: oundleu3webmanager@outlook.com

Registered Charity Number 1183800

MONDAY 9th JUNE

AGM at 2.30 pm

Followed by
our Speaker

Alex Grant

and his talk will be

**“Sex, Spies and Scandal
– the John Vassall
Affair”**

Doors open at 2.00pm
for tea/coffee and
biscuits

MONDAY 14th JULY

Philip Caine

and his talk will be

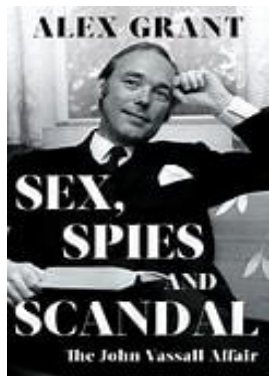
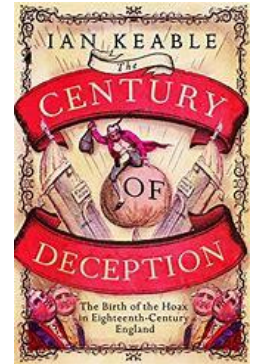
**“Barrow to Baghdad and
back”**

Queen Victoria Hall,
Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm
for tea/coffee and
biscuits

MONTHLY MEETINGS

For our monthly meeting in May we welcomed back **Ian Keable**, who spoke about 'The Century of Deception: The Birth of the Hoax in Eighteenth Century England.' His talk was interspersed with spontaneous rounds of applause from the audience as, being a professional magician and a member and archivist of the Magic Circle, Ian decided to punctuate his talk with a series of brilliant magic tricks, some of which involved 'volunteers' from the audience. He explained the difference between a hoax and a con trick, what the motives of hoaxers are and why people are taken in by them. He spoke about Vortigern, a play written by a hoaxer, and NOT by Shakespeare; we heard about George Psalmanazar, the French imposter, who claimed to be from Formosa and invented a whole Formosan alphabet and language. In our current age of scams, fake news and conspiracy theories, we can see that "There is nothing new under the sun"! (Ecclesiastes 9.)



The speaker for our meeting on **Monday 9th June 2025** will be **Alex Grant**. His book "*Sex, Spies and Scandal – the John Vassall Affair*", published in January 2024, sheds new light on a neglected spy scandal as Alex was able to access newly released MI5 files and to interview people who knew Vassall from the early 1950s until his death in 1996. (Vassall was unmasked as a Soviet spy in September 1962, while working as a clerk at the Admiralty in London.) As a writer, researcher and lecturer, Alex specialises in politics, biography and modern history. As a journalist he has worked in the USA and Britain, and has also worked in Parliament and as a Labour Councillor in the London Borough of Greenwich. The story of John Vassall is more than a military or an intelligence account, as the spy scandal exposed the deep-rooted homophobia and hypocrisy of the time. What is the connection

between Vassall, the Oundle area and Coronation Street? You must come to our June meeting to find out!

Our speaker on **Monday July 14th 2025** will be the novelist, speaker and raconteur **Philip Caine**. His talk is entitled "**Barrow to Baghdad and back**". Philip was born in 1950 in Barrow-in-Furness and began his working life in the hotel business. He then developed his career in the oil industry and spent 30 years in places such as the North Sea, Algeria, Nigeria, Kazakhstan and Russia. From 2003, he spent seven years in post-war Baghdad working with the American coalition and a further three years running oil service companies in Dubai. Since his retirement in 2015 he has spoken at over 700 venues across the UK and written nine adventure thrillers.



Please remember to bring your membership card to the meeting as it makes signing in a lot quicker.

We hereby give notice that the Annual General Meeting of Oundle and District u3a will now take place on Monday 9th June 2025 at 2.30pm in the Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle.

ICT support at Oundle School: This continues on a Wednesday afternoon from 2.30pm to 4.00pm until 18th June in the Needham Building, Blackpot Lane. So far, the students have not been inundated with Members but they would love to help you with your phone, laptop or tablet, so do go along. There is no need to book.

Oundle Library: A couple of sessions this month which might be of interest to some of our Members. They are free and you can just turn up on the day:
Friday 20th June – Crime Fiction Book Group 2.30pm
Weekly Scrabble sessions Thursdays 11.00am



The Games Group would like to invite more members to join an afternoon of relaxation and fun. The sort of games we play are: Cluedo, Rummikub and Ka-Blab, but we are happy to try any other game you wish to bring along. We do occasionally play word games such as Quiddler and Boggle. Nothing is played too seriously!

We meet once a month on the fourth Thursday afternoon in the month, from 2.00pm to 4.00pm in the Snug at the Talbot Hotel, but because we won't be meeting during the summer months, the first meeting dates will be Thursday 25th September, 30th October etc.

Please let me know, via the contact form on the website, if you are interested in joining us – the more the merrier.

Chris Wilkin

SPOTLIGHT ON CAMERA AND COMPOSITION

Recently the Camera and Composition Group explored ICM – In-Camera Movement. This means slightly moving the camera whilst taking the shot.

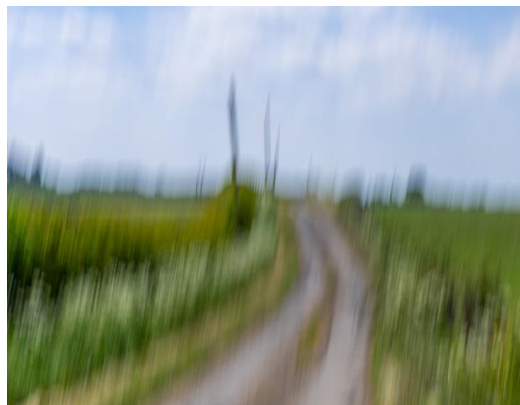
Considering that a sharp image- where you can clearly see what is being taken – was always thought desirable, why would you want to deliberately blur your picture?

A good question – and our results varied.

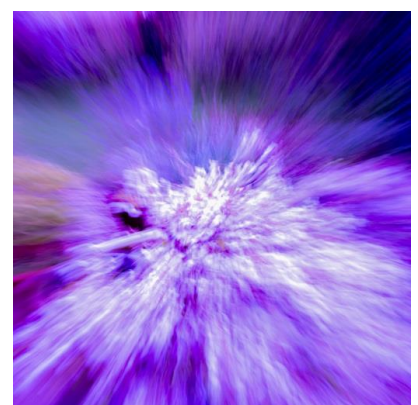
Some, frankly, were just messy but others clearly showed a sense of emotion or mood. Occasionally there was an Impressionist feel to the images.



Bluebells in the wood



The Long Road



and there were some great abstracts-*Purple Haze*

And a sense of humour- the pub sign at Fotheringhay on leaving, perhaps?



One too many?

SPOTLIGHT ON THE FALCONS WALKING GROUP

Chris Milton

Group membership continues to be high at 29 with on average 16 walking each week. Since the start of the 2025 we have not missed a Friday walk due to adverse weather, it being remarkable that it has not rained on any of our walks this year. It must be said however, that the rainy weather at the start of 2025 did result in some very muddy walks, paddling in some cases.



1st Walk of 2025



We have not experienced the challenges with pubs not being open that other groups have and over the past months we have only lost two regular venues. However we have seen four re-open and found two new venues which have given us new footpaths to explore.

Left: A frosty walk from Polebrook

This year our away week took us to the Cotswolds where we stayed at Harrington House, Bourton on the Water. The three days of wonderful walking took us to some of the well-known places within the Cotswolds area – Stow on the Wold, Morton in Marsh, Lower Slaughter, Winchcombe and the Cleve Hills. On the first day as we walked beside the river Windrush, some of our group were privileged to catch sight of two wild otters in the river. Whilst in Bourton the group took part in the HF Boat Race where we had to build a boat from recycled materials. Awards were given for the best design and the winner of the race, which was held on a section of the Windrush River. In addition to being walkers we managed to not only collect the award for the best design but also won the race down the river.



Rob, Best Design



The Launch



Chris and Jane with the Winning boat

Bourton on the Water Boat Race

2025

Date	Best Design	Race Winner	Race Time
2.1.25	KONTIKI (MIKE EWART)	NOT THE TITANIC (CATRINA MANNERS)	4m 50s
16.1.25	KONTIKI (ALMA + SARAH)	BANANA BOAT (NIGEL TIEFF)	4m 3s
23.1.25	BRING BACK BOB STICKS (PATRICK)	SHEEPISH (JOHN)	4m 35s
13.2.25	STEATY M'S TOATFACE (MAXINE)	JANE ATTWOOD HMS ABBINGTON HOUSE	4m 52s
27.2.25	TETUOY TRIUMPH (KATIE)	HY RACER (RITA + HEREK)	4m 2s
13.3.25	THE BLUEBELL (JANE BLAKE)	TATY WANDERER (WENDY MILLER)	4m 41s
3.4.25	HMS TEABAG (JAN + HELEN)	WINDRUSH WIPEROUT (MALCOLM)	5m 36s
17.4.25	Bledau Bach (Iain + Marie)	Cycl-ops Iain	5m 12s
24.4.25	HMS Holiday Fellowship (JAN)	HMS Holiday Fellowship (JAN)	5m 32s
01.05.25	VERONICA (ROSIE HUTCHINSON)	VERONICA (ROSIE HUTCHINSON)	5 MIN 57 SECS
15.05.25	SLAUGHTER 2 (ROB TAYLOR)	FALCON LEADER (CHRIS + JANE MILTON)	6 MIN 34 SECS

Role of Honour

The group is already looking forward to next year's trip which will be to Church Stretton where the landscape will be much different to the Cotswolds.

The group now has a full programme of walks up to the August break, which includes the annual visit to Knott Cottage for the Winwick walk courtesy of Jane and Neil.

There are numerous health benefits from walking:-

1. Strengthens the cardiovascular system Walking improves blood circulation, strengthens the heart, and reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases.
2. Aids weight loss and fat burning.
3. Tones muscles and improves posture.
4. Reduces stress and improves mental well-being.
5. Boosts metabolism.
6. Prevents chronic diseases.
7. Improves digestion and gut health.
8. Strengthens the immune system.
9. Enhances sleep quality.
10. Boosts brain function and creativity.

Although we are quite a large group we do have space for a few more, so if you like walking and socialising and can manage between 6 and 8 miles do get in touch via the website.

Ukulele Group entertain at Abbott House



Oundle u3a's Ukulele Group, aka the Jumping Fleas, took the residents of Abbott House on a trip down memory lane in May. With our repertoire of songs, chosen to reflect VE Day, everyone joined in with all-time WW2 favourites such as *The White Cliffs of Dover* and *We'll Meet Again* and we reminisced WW1 with *If You Were the Only Girl in the World* and *Lili Marlene*. We brought everyone into the post WW2 era with Pete Seeger's *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* The 1955 anti-war protest song reminds us all of

the futility of war - when will we ever learn? It's a message as relevant today as it was back then. And we included all-time favourites *She Wears Red Feathers* and *Leaning on a Lamppost*, the George Formby ukulele classic, to entertain our audience.

It was the day before VE Day and Abbott House was decorated for the celebration. The Jumping Fleas all came dressed in red, white and blue, with Union Jack flags to commemorate our victory in Europe in 1945.



JUNE'S QUIZ

Part One: Can you work out what all the answers have in common?

1. Surname shared by war poet Siegfried and hairstylist Vidal.
2. What did the owl and pussycat use to eat their mince and slices of quince?
3. Musical woodwind instrument which plays in the tenor and bass ranges.
4. A novel by RD Blackmore published in 1869.
5. Popular ballad by Rodgers and Hart, hit for Mel Tormé in 1949.
6. A preserved plum.
7. Surname of the Sunday Post comic strip family.
8. A musical about a fictional village that appears for one day every 100 years.
9. To sing in a soft voice, especially in a sentimental manner.
10. A season of heavy rain.
11. A brownish red colour.
12. A military unit.
13. A flattish biscuit made with coconut.

Part Two: It's all about June.

1. Trooping the Colour is held in London annually on a Saturday in June, on which parade ground?
2. June has two zodiac signs, can you name both?
3. What is June's birthstone?
4. '*Seven Days in Sunny June*', by Jamiroquai, is the soundtrack when Andrea and Christian meet at James Holt's party in which 2006 American film?
5. In which year did June Brown first play the role of Dot Cotton, in *EastEnders*?
6. Which historical novel begins in 1815 and culminates with the 1832 June Rebellion in Paris?
7. The longest day of the year can occur on one of three dates in June; can you name any of the three?
8. In its own country it is commonly known as the June Fourth Incident; where did this incident happen?
9. In 1968, June Whitfield began her long television partnership with which actor and comedian?
10. Which 1956 film adaptation of a Rodgers and Hammerstein stage musical of the same name features the song *June is Bustin' Out All Over*?
11. What takes place near Pilton in the last week of June, each year?
12. What historical event happened on Tuesday, 6th June 1944?

Answers to May's Quiz

Part One: 1. Picnic; 2. Minstrels; 3. Yorkie; 4. Quality Street; 5. KitKat; 6. Aero; 7. Double Decker; 8. Wispa; 9. Galaxy; 10. Bounty.

Part Two: 1. England and Scotland; 2. The Great Exhibition; 3. Ayrton Senna; 4. Queen Elizabeth 2; 5. Amsterdam; 6. 1926; 7. Emperor Napoleon; 8. Alan Shepard; 9. Louis XIV; 10. 1954.