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NEWSLETTER for OUNDLE & DISTRICT

**Edition Number 205
November 2025**

If you would like to find out more about Oundle & District u3a, take a look at <https://oundleanddistrict.u3asite.uk> or contact Chairman: oundleu3achairman@gmail.com Membership Secretary: oundleu3amembership@gmail.com Website Manager: oundleu3awebmanager@outlook.com

Registered Charity Number 1183800

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

In early October we held what has now become our annual Meeting for Group



Leaders at Barnwell Village Hall. The format has evolved over the last few years but it is our opportunity to thank our Group Leaders, on all Members' behalf, for all that they do to ensure that our 75 Interest Groups run as smoothly as possible. It also enables us to pass on any new information, and gives them

chance to discuss issues or ask questions and, of course, to chat informally over tea and cakes.

The title for these vital people has been much debated locally and at national level over the years, with monikers such as Group managers, Group contacts or co-ordinators being suggested. When all is said and done, does it matter? The important thing is that each Group has someone (or sometimes two people, as a job share) who contacts their members to let them know about future meetings or visits and who checks that things are organised.

There is a Guidelines for Group Leaders on our website, which we hope gives useful advice and the appendix contains the different forms that might need completing. Even if you are not a Group Leader, do check it out. It is not intended to put you off, but to be helpful!

Our Group Leaders are vital to the success of our Groups and therefore our u3a. Some are leaders of more than one Group (ask a busy person...!), some have been leaders for years and some are 'freshers', but we want them to know that they are all very much appreciated.

It is really encouraging that new Groups are starting – most recently Crime Novels Book Group and Wine Appreciation Group, with another Genealogy Group in the pipeline – all with enthusiastic Leaders! Perhaps you have an idea for a new Group, but worry about the responsibility of being the leader. Fear not, help is at hand, so don't be shy! I have several ideas for new Groups and, once I retire from being Chairman, I hope to get at least one started, which I will offer to lead.

As Alan Walmsley, Chair of the Board at Third Age Trust, says: 'we are a mutual learning organisation, which means that every member is expected to make the u3a a success by helping, supporting and sharing'.

Enjoy yourselves in your Groups as you 'learn, laugh, live'.

Gill

MONDAY 10th NOVEMBER

Debbie Land

And her talk will be

**'Secret War – the
Lysander's Clandestine
Role in SOE Operations'**

Doors open at 2.00pm
for tea/coffee and biscuits

MONDAY 8th DECEMBER

will showcase

Sweet F.A.

**featuring The Julie
Burgess One**

Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm
for Christmas Fayre

MONTHLY MEETINGS



For our Monthly Meeting in October we welcomed Chris McDevitt, one of our own members, whose talk on **Food Poisoning** left us with a great deal to think about; dare I say food for thought?! Chris told us about the risks of infection from bacteria including campylobacter, salmonella and listeria. In the UK we eat one billion chickens per year, most of which are intensively reared and many develop antibacterial resistance. We heard that in Scotland, 400 people were poisoned by eating corned beef from one contaminated slicing machine and that there is an EU ban on chlorinated chicken. On a positive note, we were told to cook chicken and minced beef thoroughly, to wash salad, even if prepacked, and to always cook frozen vegetables. The interested audience asked several questions of our expert at the end.

The speaker at our Monthly Meeting on **Monday 10th November** will be Debbie Land, whose talk is entitled '**Secret War – the Lysander's Clandestine Role in SOE Operations**'. In World War Two, agents of the Special Operations Executive were transported into Europe and back again by Lysander aircraft. Debbie's talk will focus on one of the only two airworthy Lysander aircraft in the UK, based at the Shuttleworth Collection in Bedfordshire, where she has been a volunteer for eleven years. In her presentation, we shall hear about the aircraft, the bases, the operations and the pilots that flew them, as well as the role of the agents in supporting clandestine operations.



Our December meeting on **Monday 8th December** will showcase **Sweet F.A. featuring The Julie Burgess One**, who feel that the great tradition of the English comic song is long overdue for a comeback – and the time is now! Peter Fairweather and Will Adams began to write together in 1997 when they discovered they shared an unhealthy obsession of puns, leading to the formation of Sweet F.A., allowing this 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. Some of their songs are thoughtful and poignant, they say, but most are just downright daft. As this is our Christmas meeting,

seasonal refreshments will be available. Tickets are £2 for this event will be on sale at our November monthly meeting or from David Tinsley, our Treasurer.

FOOL CALENDAR: Just a note to say that we will be selling FOOL calendars at our November and December meetings – photos by Barbara Bett's Camera and Composition Group.

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

ICT Classes

The ICT sessions run by Oundle School pupils resume on Wednesday 5th November at 2.30pm at **OUNDLE LIBRARY** Glaphorn Road – *note change of venue*.

If you would like help with any of your devices, just take them along – no need to let anyone know in advance.

Information from our Committee Meeting on 7th October

We discussed final arrangements for the Group Leaders' Meeting.

We planned a strategy for recruiting to the Committee.

We discussed refreshments for the December monthly meeting.

Gill Phillips has been authorised to vote on our behalf at the TAT AGM on 15th October.

Individual reports included:

An interview about our u3a for the next Oundle Chronicle edition; end of year returns for Group Leaders; budget for Speakers for monthly meetings; ideas for the August 2026 monthly meeting; advertising in our Newsletters; Beacon training.

Information from the Northamptonshire Network meeting 24th October

Eight Northamptonshire u3as met to discuss matters of mutual interest.

We welcomed John Perry, the East Midlands PR Adviser and John Lewis, our EM Council representative, whose birthday it was, so we enjoyed birthday cake too.

After the formal business, we spilt into two groups – one for Chairs and one for Publicity. There was lots of frank and lively discussion in both groups and everyone agreed that it was good to share ideas and concerns with other u3as.

Our next meeting will be in March 2026 for Chairs and Membership Secretaries.

Third Age Trust AGM

Report by Gill Phillips

The Oundle & District u3a is just one cog in the Third Age Trust (TAT) movement which now has over 420,000 members nationwide. This makes it one of the largest membership organisations in the UK. On 15th October I joined approximately 680 other members attending the TAT AGM online to find out what has been happening over the past year and how the movement is expecting to develop over the coming year.

Financially, TAT continues to thrive with an income of £3.47million in the 2024-25 financial year. Of the £3.4million expenditure last year, much was spent on Resolution 500k. This resolution states that the movement aims to increase its membership to 500,000 by the end of 2028. In fact Resolution 500k will be allocated 45% of expenditure in the coming year. So we expect to see much u3a publicity in the press, on social media, and on Boom Radio, with support for new and old members coming along in the form of workshops and on-line activities. It all promotes the idea that the Third Age Trust is a movement where everyone has the opportunity to lead a positive and fulfilling later life.

One other issue discussed was the changes in society that have taken place over the forty years since the movement started. Nowadays those who no longer work full-time often have caring roles, are more technically literate, have greater freedom to travel and a more liberal approach to life. This has led to a huge reduction in the number of volunteers coming forward to support charities or organisations and a plea to local u3as to push for members to volunteer to support the movement in one way or another. This support might take many forms: offering to help out at meetings by providing refreshments or setting out equipment, becoming members of the Committee, leading a Group or even offering to be on the Regional or National Networks and Groups. If you have a passion, a skill or just want to be part of something worthwhile, do think about volunteering for the u3a. I don't think you'll regret it.

December Monthly Meeting

Don't forget to buy your tickets in advance for our meeting on Monday 8th December from David (treasureroundleu3a@gmail.com) or at the November meeting.

Your Committee needs you!

Remember we are looking for three new members to join our Committee. Group Leaders will be reading out, or may have done already, a letter which gives the details. Can YOU rise to the challenge?

Advertising

Recently we have had lots of requests from local (and sometimes distant) organisations to advertise events in our Newsletter. It has always been our policy to restrict adverts to events that Members help to organise and this was reaffirmed at our October Committee meeting. In future we will give brief details of such events:

The Marriage of Figaro – Peterborough Opera – 14th–16th November at St Peter's Church, Oundle. Details at: www.peterboroughopera.co.uk

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Lidia Douglas groupscoordinatoroundleu3a@gmail.com

I have had a couple of requests from members who would like a basic French Group, an Exercise Group (like the Stretch and Relax Group we had) and an Art Group. If there are any members out there who would like to start one of these, do let me know and we will see whether we can get one off the ground.

Please do look at the Group list of activities on the website, as there are some Groups who would like new members. If you have any problems contacting Group Leaders, do let me know.

LEISURELY WALKERS AND TALKERS: We are a small, friendly Group that does what it says on the box. We meet in the morning on the first and third Monday of the month at 10.30am.

We take a leisurely stroll around the Barnwell Country Park lakes and then make our way to the Kingfisher Café for coffee and cake, but be warned: sometimes the chat lasts longer than the stroll!


If the idea of fresh air and a natter in a friendly environment appeals to you, please come and join us. You will never be under pressure to 'keep up'. We match our pace to whoever is slowest. Please contact Pam Richardson via the link on the Group's webpage.

Who would think, looking at this cheery photo (*right*) of the **u3a's Philosophy Group**, that the members had just been discussing the ethics of killing people!



SPOTLIGHT ON MILITARY HISTORY BOYS

Supported by: Friends of Oundle Library



They Think It's All Over

A talk by Oundle's Military History Boys about what happened after VJ-Day in 1945.

Oundle Library
Wednesday, 5 November @ 6.30pm

Tickets cost £6.00 and are available from Oundle Library and the Oundle Bookshop (cash only). Refreshments. Doors open at 6.00pm.

www.friendsofoundlelibrary.org.uk

Come and join us on 5th November at 6.00pm at Oundle Library for this talk which starts at 6.30pm.

SPOTLIGHT ON GARDEN GROUP 3



One of the delights of the gardening year is the autumn season, when trees and shrubs turn from green to various hues of yellows, oranges, rust and red so when planning our year's programme, we try to slot in a visit to a garden or arboretum that is known for this spectacle and this year's choice was the Bluebell Arboretum and Nursery in Smisby near Ashby de la Zouche. (One can never help but think of Gyles Brandreth when



saying the name of this town!)



Founded in 1979 in the village of Blackfordby, they are not a bluebell wood as many think, but took their name from the Bluebell pub they were next to, as they shared the car park with them and it seemed sensible to call it the Bluebell Nursery so they would be easier to find.

The mail order and retail award-winning nursery is a family run business which specialises in trees, shrubs, climbers and woody herbaceous plants including a large selection of very rare and unusual varieties.



Moving to their present site, the nursery is now surrounded by nine acres of stunning woodland. Originally a field, the planting of the trees and shrubs started in 1992 with a collection of flowering dogwoods (flowering in June), acers, giant redwoods, oaks, rare birch trees for winter bark colour and much more. Autumn colour starts in September and goes through until November.



After having had a rather nice lunch in the Smisby Arms pub, which is very close by, we spent a lovely couple of hours wandering around the woods, admiring the beautiful autumn colour and very unusual trees. We had been a couple of times over the years, and once again, it certainly didn't disappoint.



With all the beautiful photos members of the Group took, it was very hard choosing which to showcase. I hope the ones I have chosen, have done the Arboretum justice.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE DANTE GROUP

Robert-Louis Abrahamson

Our group is reading and discussing Dante's *Inferno*, covering three cantos each session. The readings are supplemented by the podcasts posted by Robert-Louis on the '*Opening Dante's Divine Comedy*' podcast (<https://rlabrahamson1.substack.com/podcast>). Over coffee or tea, we spend an hour focusing on whatever questions or observations have arisen from the cantos of the month. This past session we discussed: the way in which Dante considers usury as a form of Violence against Nature, and the question of whether Dante expected his readers to take his descriptions of Hell literally (he didn't), the need for us always to verify the truth of what we read by connecting it to our living experience, and a few other topics, as usual finding ourselves surprised that we'd arrived at the end of our hour's session.

We are a small but growing group, and we welcome new members. We meet in the Talbot Hotel's Snug at 2.00pm once a month, usually the third Wednesday and our next meeting is on Wednesday, 19th November, when we will be considering Cantos 14, 15, 16 of the *Inferno*. There is no specific translation we recommend, but it's advisable to have an edition with good notes.



NOVEMBER'S QUIZ

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Part One: How good is your local knowledge? Can you identify the following places?

1. The place where Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded.
2. The birthplace of 17th century poet, John Dryden.
3. Airfield where actor Clark Gable was stationed during WWII.
4. Location where a grammar school was founded in 1556 by Sir William Laxton.
5. Home of Strictly Come Dancing judge Craig Revel Horwood.
6. The place where the World Conker Championship was founded in 1965.
7. Town where the pronunciation of the River Nene changes from 'nen' to 'neen'.
8. Former home of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.
9. The burial place of Catherine of Aragon.
10. Home of the Proby family since 1660.

Part Two: It happened in November.

1. November was the month in which this British heroine was born. She famously rescued survivors from a shipwreck off Northumbria in 1838. Who was she?
2. Lewis Carroll's novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published in November 1865. What was the writer's real name?
3. In November 1990, who became the first female President of Ireland?
4. One of the most popular board games ever devised was launched by Parker Brothers in 1935. What was it?
5. In 1940, which politician became the only U.S. President to win a third term in office?
6. Which politician resigned as British Prime Minister in 1940 and died in November of the same year?
7. Who became King of Spain following the death of Franco in 1975?
8. In November of which year did Angela Merkel become the first female Chancellor of Germany?
9. What was the name of the dog Russia launched into orbit around the earth in 1957?
10. What was the name of the Israeli Prime Minister who was assassinated while at a peace rally in 1995?

Answers to October's Quiz

Part One: 1. Etna (*found in Jane Fenton*); 2. Ajar (*found in Jane Hayward*); 3. Pigs (*found in Gill Potts*); 4. Davies (*found in David Tinsley*); 5. Adagio (*found in Lidia Douglas*); 6. Acorn (*found in Carolyn Traynor*); 7. ABBA (*found in Barbara Bett*); 8. Hills (*found in Gill Phillips*).

Part Two: 1. Coven; 2. Noisy Ghost; 3. Harry Houdini; 4. Ireland; 5. None; 6. Samhainophobia; 7. Central America; 8. Scorpio; 9. Hammer Films; 10. All Saints Day; 11. Ancient Rome; 12. Lancaster; 13. Florist; 14. Mexico; 15. Turnips.

Quizzes devised by members of the Quizzes 'n' Puzzles Group.