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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Did you open a new u3a chapter last month, as suggested in my January message? Our Shakespeare Group kept its promise to try something a little different as we are now an amalgamation of two groups. We started by reading Act 1 of *Twelfth Night*, with each of us reading one part and keeping the same part for the whole Act. We then watched a Thames Television production of Act 1 with the late Richard Briers as a very toothy Malvolio. Discussion followed as to how we felt we had coped with our reading, whether we should have watched the professionals first, did we like the setting and the costumes and the production overall. As you can imagine, with eight of us, we had plenty to talk about! Please let us know if *you* have experimented with any changes in your Group recently. You know how articles appear on your phone regularly, whether you want them or not! A couple of weeks ago, one called Simple Pleasures popped up. I found it really interesting. The point being made in the article was that we don't get boring and less interested in what is going on as we get older, (which is very reassuring!) but that we become more satisfied with simpler things and apparently we are wiser for it.

Some of the pleasures mentioned were: a quiet start to the day, free time in the diary (this made me laugh!), enjoying a hobby, good conversations and walking freely, which certainly appealed to me.

Many of our u3a activities could probably be referred to as simple pleasures because for the most part, we don't have to think *too* hard (unless we are leading a session), we can learn a lot without having to be too academic or technical, and we can enjoy a good catch up with friends, old and new. In other words, we 'learn, laugh, live'.

My top three simple pleasures would be: a walk – it is amazing what pops into your head as you go along; a relaxed meal with family/friends where the conversation can change tack at any time; curling up with a good book or crossword and losing track of time.

Now, over to you – what are your simple pleasures? Do get in touch and let me know – answers on a postcard, please! We could include a few anonymously in the next Newsletter to see what pleasures resonate with other Members!

Enjoy yourself!

Gill

NEWSLETTER for OUNDLÉ & DISTRICT

Edition Number 208
February 2026

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

MONDAY 9TH FEBRUARY

Michael Burton

And his talk will be

**"Abraham Lincoln's
America"**

Queen Victoria Hall,
Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm
for tea/coffee and
biscuits

MONDAY 9TH MARCH

Stuart Orme

And his talk will be

**"A History of Crime and
Punishment in
Peterborough"**

Queen Victoria Hall,
Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm
for tea/coffee and
biscuits

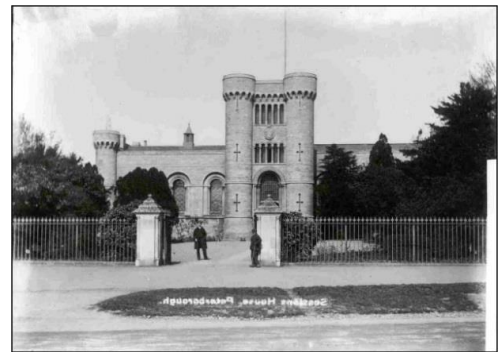
MONTHLY MEETINGS

2026 began with a packed Queen Victoria Hall when **Michael Aubrey**, an Oundle u3a member and well known Oundle resident, spoke at our Monthly Meeting about his **"Improbable Adventures"**, giving us glimpses into a past world. Michael regaled us with tales of working as a talking frog in a Cape Cod funfair, travelling by train in India, socialising in Persia on the cusp of revolution and entering the closed country of Nepal. These were all true experiences, unlike the ghost stories he narrated as a house master to boarders, which gave the title to Michael's autobiography *"Is That Really True, Sir"*, published by Unicorn, which contains many of Michael's paintings and I can confirm is an absolute page turner.



Michael Burton, a locally based former journalist and history teacher, will be the speaker at our Monthly Meeting on **Monday 9th February**. He is a regular speaker at venues throughout the East Midlands and was Assistant Head at Uppingham School for many years. His talk is entitled **"Abraham Lincoln's America"**. Abraham Lincoln was born into a dynamic and explosive world, where he got to grips with the ultimate challenge – destroying his country's crime against humanity, a task which required brilliant strategy, precision timing and possibly, the most beautiful of all political poetry. We extend a warm welcome to Michael Burton for what promises to be an engaging and well-illustrated talk.

On **Monday 9th March** the speaker at our Monthly Meeting will be Stuart Orme, who has been the curator of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon since 2018. He is well known locally for giving talks to groups on historical subjects and can also be heard regularly on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire. His talk **"A History of Crime and Punishment in Peterborough"** will be an entertaining and occasionally gruesome look at the history of crime and punishment in the city – from the history of the city gaols to the development of the police force. This is definitely a talk not to be missed!



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

Oundle and District AGM

We hereby give notice that the Annual General Meeting of Oundle and District u3a will take place on **Monday 11th May 2026 at 2.30pm** in the Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle.

oundleu3asecretary@gmail.com

Our next Committee meeting will be on February 2nd, when the main focus will be finalising arrangements for the AGM and discussing publicity ideas.

Visits to Groups

I would love to visit your Group if you can squeeze me in – but I only have three months left as Chairman, so please get in touch ASAP! oundleu3achairman@gmail.com

Oundle Library

Don't forget that the Oundle School ICT help sessions take place at the Library on Wednesday afternoons (during term-time) from 2.30pm – 4.00pm. All you need to do is take along your troublesome device (phone, iPad or laptop) and the team will be able to advise. Members who have already gone along say the team are really helpful.

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Lidia Douglas groupscoordinatoroundleu3a@gmail.com

If you have any spaces in your Groups, please let Lidia know and she will have a note put in the Newsletter.



Chinwaggers next meets on February 26th between 10.00am and noon. However, for this month, we will be meeting in the coffee lounge of the Talbot Hotel, as they have a wedding taking place and need the Snug for that day. We will be back in the Snug from March 26th.



Quizzes 'n' Puzzles have a couple of spaces available in their Group. We meet on the second Thursday of the month at 2.00pm, with members' taking turns to host and enjoy a variety of quiz and/or games sessions, mostly resulting in much laughter. If you would like to join us, please contact the Group Leaders Stephne Tewson or Jane Morris using the link on the website.



Playreading Group 2: We have space for a couple more people to join our Group. We meet in each other's homes on the first Thursday of the month at 2.30pm for a couple of hours or so. We aim to read a variety of playwrights and the plays we read are chosen from the large selection available at Peterborough Central Library; they are free and available for three-months at a time if necessary. If you would like to join us, please contact the Group Leaders Stephne Tewson or Jane Morris using the link on the website.

The Ukulele Group: The Jumping Fleas have continued to play for Abbott House residents, and during our entertainment in October we were delighted, and quite moved, to see many of the residents and staff get to their feet and dance as we played "*Save the last dance for me*". In December we played again for Abbott House and also for Polebrook Nursing Home. It was our first visit there and our Christmas programme brought smiles to the faces of both staff and residents. It was great to see them join in for some familiar favourites, as well as other more recent festive numbers. In both cases, they were keen for us to play for them again in the near future. All the while, we are expanding our repertoire and improving our skills.



Wednesday Walkers: It was only 28th January, but spring was definitely in the air when the Wednesday Walkers met at Ferry Meadows. After so much rain earlier in the month, it was a relief to walk on the boardwalk and on decent paths in the less visited corners of the country park.

The group has been going for three years now, walking on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. Walks are normally about 5 miles, within a 10-mile radius of Oundle and we often stop for coffee en route.

If you would like to join us, the details are on the website. Jenny Munro





SPOTLIGHT ON BOOK GROUP ONE

Hilary Delany

If you are looking for a good read to help you through the winter gloom, here is a selection of books read by Book Group One during 2025.

The Years by Annie Ernaux: Described as a unique 'collective biography', it traces the author's life and French society from 1941 to 2006. The book describes Ernaux's life using photos, songs, consumer goods and cultural shifts, all told in the third person.

Miss Benson's Beetle by Rachel Joyce: In this novel, the author of *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*, takes us on a much longer journey – to New Caledonia in the southern hemisphere. It is 1950 and following a devastating moment of clarity, Margery Benson abandons her dead-end teaching job and advertises for an assistant to accompany her on an expedition to search for a beetle that may or may not exist. Enid Pretty is not the companion Margery envisaged, but together they will be drawn into an adventure that will exceed all their expectations.

The Lost Bookshop by Evie Woods: Three strangers – Opaline, Martha and Henry – whose lives are in different eras (1920s and present day Dublin) become connected by a mysterious magical bookshop that appears and disappears, revealing extraordinary stories, helping them find their own paths, culminating in a shared destiny.

Wavewalker by Suzanne Heywood: A powerful story about an extraordinary childhood. Aged just seven, Suzanne sets sail with her parents and younger brother on a three-year voyage around the world. It became a decade-long way of life – through storms, shipwrecks and isolation. With few friends and little formal schooling, Suzanne makes heroic efforts to educate herself, seeing it as a way of escaping family entrapment.

How It All Began by Penelope Lively: Set in suburban north London – retired teacher Charlotte is incapacitated by a broken hip following a mugging. Reluctantly, she goes to stay with her daughter and son-in-law to convalesce and recuperate. This temporary change in Charlotte's circumstances prompts a ripple of change among a cast of family, acquaintances and strangers alike. By the end of the novel, entire lives have been irrevocably changed.

The Art of Racing in the Rain by Garth Stein: We are introduced to Denny and his family by Enzo the dog. It is Enzo who describes the thrill of competitive motor racing, along with a heart-tugging storyline of hope in the face of despair. A film was made in 2019, with Kevin Costner voicing the part of Enzo.

Paris Echo by Sebastian Faulks: Hannah, an American academic and Tariq, a Moroccan teenager, come together when, against her better judgement, Hannah decides to let Tariq stay in the spare room of the apartment she is using while she investigates several life stories during WW2. Tariq has come to Paris to try and find out more about his unknown mother. The author's love of the city is evident, along with his extensive knowledge of the Metro-system!

The Girl With the Louding Voice by Abi Dare: As a third wife of an older man in a small Nigerian village, 14 year old Adunni's life prospects look bleak. However, she is smart and still determined to complete her education. When circumstances compel her to leave the village, she heads for Lagos where further misadventures await. Will Adunni triumph and reach her desired goal? Read on and find out.

You Are Here by David Nichols: The novel is written in alternating perspectives from two divorced/separated and lonely characters; Marnie, a 38 year old copy editor from London and Michael, a 42 year old geography teacher from York. Their mutual friend Cleo organises a group to go on a long distance walking trip across the Lake District, inviting experienced walker Michael and inexperienced Marnie, in hopes that it will help them engage with the world again. Gradually the group thins out, leaving only Michael and Marnie to complete the walk. Will there be a happy ending for this cagoule-clad pair?

The Glassmaker by Tracy Chevalier: Orsola is a member of the Rosso glass making family who live on the Venetian island of Murano, where time moves rather differently. As a woman she receives little or no encouragement to follow her desire to work with glass. However, her persistence pays off and in time she becomes a respected glassmaker specialising in making beads. Chevalier's trick is to move Orsola and others through the centuries, only ageing them gradually. The author gave a talk in Oundle last year and it was evident how much research she had done on the subject.

Happy reading.



February's Quiz



Part One: All the answers to the following questions are a number. Add up the numbers and what is the sum total?

1. 1991 hit for Chesney Hawkes.
2. Dystopian fiction novel by George Orwell.
3. A musical about a Broadway show rehearsals, during the Depression.
4. How many flew over the Cuckoo's Nest?
5. How many billboards outside Ebbing, Missouri?
6. How many miles were the Proclaimers prepared to walk?
7. How many red balloons did Nena have?
8. Andy Warhol's observation about celebrity.
9. A short nap.
10. Drunk (from nautical slang).

Part Two: Fascinating facts about February

1. February has either 28 or 29 days depending on the year, but the month used to be much shorter. How many days did it originally have?
2. What is the name of February's full moon?
3. Groundhog Day is based on a German superstition, but they also put their faith in another animal. What animal is it?
4. What is the name of the mythological being who represents February's famous day of love?
5. What are the two zodiac signs of February?
6. What shape is associated with February?
7. What are the two reasons that this shape represents February?
8. True or False? February is the second month of the year, according to the Roman calendar.
9. What is the birthstone for February?
10. Which country sometimes celebrates its new year in February?

ANSWERS TO JANUARY'S QUIZ

Part One: 1. Study and Dusty; 2. Save and Vase; 3. Horse and Shore; 4. Rat and Art; 5. Race and Care; 6. Acne and Cane; 7. Diver and Drive; 8. March and Charm; 9. Love and Vole; 10. Doc and Cod; 11. Lemon and Melon; 12. Begin and Binge.

Part Two: 1. Specsavers; 2. Red Bull; 3. Kellogg's Rice Krispies; 4. L'Oréal; 5. Have a Kit Kat; 6. Pringles; 7. Coca Cola; 8. BMW; 9. Skittles; 10. Marmite.