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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A very Happy New Year!

I hope you enjoyed the excesses of Christmas and that you kept well and that you are now looking forward to another year of u3a activities.

Thank you for all your articles, making the December Newsletter a bumper edition. It would be great if we could have as much news every month!

I read somewhere that January reminds us that we have 12 new chapters to fill. I rather like that idea as it suggests lots of new things happening and it also suggests to me a blank canvas to be completed – that feeling of stepping into the unknown perhaps, but with like-minded people, ready to take a risk!

The new year brings lots of opportunities for us all – ideas for new Groups, new ideas to try in your existing Groups, new places to visit once the weather improves, new friends to make and new members to welcome to those Groups which have spaces. Please remember to let Lidia know if you have spaces so that these can be advertised in the Newsletter and on the website.

Some of you may be thinking it sounds a bit like making resolutions for the New Year and that resolutions are only made to be broken! Of course there may be some truth in that, but it is always good to try a new venture. Shakespeare Group 2 has already agreed plans to do things slightly differently in January. We may find it doesn't quite go to plan or that we don't enjoy the new format, but we are going to give it a go. You never know until you try.

Looking to the future of u3a as a whole, the TAT Board has ambitious plans to grow the movement and there has been much written about the best ways to advertise ourselves to the wider public. How many times have you told someone about your u3a activity and they have asked, 'What is u3a?' We certainly need to sell ourselves more and we should be the ones to do it as we members already know the benefits of belonging. If you have any ideas for how we can advertise ourselves locally, please do get in touch. This could be Chapter 1 for 2026!

I look forward to seeing you soon,



# NEWSLETTER for Oundle & District

Edition Number 207  
January 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](mailto:oundleu3achairman@gmail.com) Membership Secretary: [oundleu3amembership@gmail.com](mailto:oundleu3amembership@gmail.com) Website Manager: [oundleu3awebmanager@outlook.com](mailto:oundleu3awebmanager@outlook.com)

Registered Charity Number 1183800

**MONDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY**

**Michael Aubrey**

And his talk will be

**"Improbable Adventures"**

Queen Victoria Hall,  
Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm  
for tea/coffee and  
biscuits

**MONDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> 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

*Gill*

## MONTHLY MEETINGS

There was an audience of over one hundred members at our Christmas meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December, where we were entertained by Sweet F.A. (Peter Fairweather, Will Adams and Julie Burgess). Their repertoire of self-penned songs covered many topical themes which struck a chord, from communication with banks to the demise of the British pub.

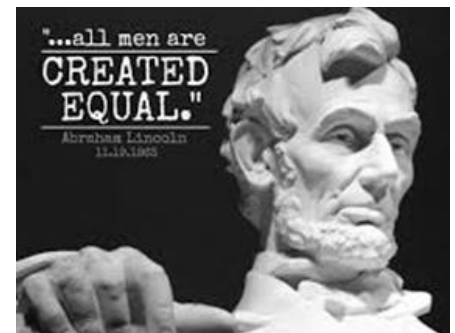


We remembered the details of our early lives in 'Distant Windows', felt pride in the fact that we are an island race and felt the nostalgia of our first car. Nor shall we forget the advice not to murder someone on T.V! The great tradition of the English comic song is alive and well, thanks to Sweet F.A. Their fame had gone before them and they did not disappoint!



**Michael Aubrey**, an Oundle resident and member of Oundle u3a, will be our speaker on **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January** with a talk entitled **"Improbable Adventures"**. Michael was a barrister, don, schoolmaster and artist, but this talk is mainly about his unlikely experiences in Papua New Guinea, famine-stricken India, the Wild West of America and the Australian outback, including some of the surprising people whom he encountered (e.g. Colonel Gaddafi and Salvador Dali). These are among the incidents narrated in Michael's memoir, *"Is That Really True, Sir?"* published by Unicorn (including 80 of his paintings), copies of which will be available at the talk.

On **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February** we welcome to our Monthly Meeting **Michael Burton**, a locally based retired history teacher. His historically themed talks tell an engaging story and are all profusely illustrated. His presentation on **"Abraham Lincoln's America"** is a close-up study of one of the most remarkable men in history. Michael will explain how Abraham Lincoln's warm personality was the key which enabled him substantially to shape his own country, and also to set the agenda for the modern world.



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

## Oundle and District AGM

Our AGM will take place on Monday May 11<sup>th</sup> – please put the date in your diary now!

Remember there is still plenty of time to put yourself forward to join the Committee – either for a specific role (Chairman, Programme Secretary, Web Manager) or as a member 'without portfolio'!

Please contact: [oundleu3achairman@gmail.com](mailto:oundleu3achairman@gmail.com)

## Information from our Committee Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025

We reviewed the October Group Leaders' meeting. Several suggestions for change had been put forward at the meeting. In the end we decided to stay with October for the event but that we would serve both savoury and sweet refreshments in future. The format works well in that it is a social occasion but includes a little 'business' too.

The December monthly meeting arrangements were finalised.

Recruitment to Committee was again discussed as our next Meeting in February will focus on the paperwork and arrangements for the AGM.

Gill Phillips gave a report on the Third Age Trust AGM.

The 2026 programme for speakers at monthly meetings was discussed.

Barbara Bett gave an update on subscription renewals.

An East Midlands Regional Event will take place on 11<sup>th</sup> March in Leicester. Two Committee members will attend. The keynote speaker will be Alan Walmsley, Chair of the TAT Board.

Jane Fenton gave a brief resumé on the Publicity discussion from the last Network meeting. This will be an agenda item for our next meeting on February 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Lidia Douglas [groupscoordinatoroundleu3a@gmail.com](mailto:groupscoordinatoroundleu3a@gmail.com)



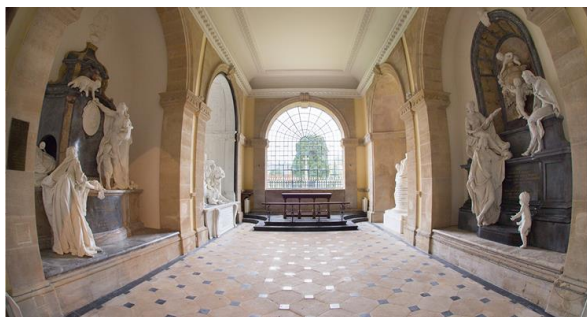
**Chinwaggers** meets again from January 22<sup>nd</sup> between 10.00am and noon in the Snug of the Talbot Hotel and every fourth Thursday of the month until November 2026.

**Family History Advanced 2:** This is a friendly group of five people who have been working together for many years. One of our hopes for 2026 is to find more people who want to join this group, not only to enhance their own research, but also to bring to the group their enthusiasm and, hopefully, new ways of researching which we have not covered. In 2026 our project for the year is to make sure we have found all our 3<sup>rd</sup> grandparents and in November, to look at our relatives who served in wars, either as members of the armed services or working in civilian roles. To get the best benefit from this group you need to have been working on your family history for some years and know the basics. We meet on the morning of the second Wednesday in the month. Please contact through the link on the website if you would like to join or want to talk to me about the group and I will get back to you. Anne Garraway

### SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Rachel Terry

For our November 2025 meeting, our Local History Group arranged for a guided tour of Warkton Church and its splendid memorials. The Church is normally only open in August, so this visit had to be arranged in advance. It was worth it.



St Edmund's Church, Warkton, is a beautiful parish church situated within the small estate village of Warkton, Northamptonshire. The oldest elements of the church date from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, but the current church dates largely from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The notable exception to this is the 18<sup>th</sup> century chancel, which was commissioned by the Duchess of Montagu, Mary Churchill, who was the wife of John, the second Duke of Montagu. It was designed by the celebrated French artist Louis François Roubiliac. The

chancel was purposefully designed to house grand funerary monuments to the Duke and his family, and includes a huge east window which floods the space with light.

We had an excellent guided tour, first of the church and then of each of the four monuments, which constitute one of the finest and most important sets of funerary monuments in the country. Their importance owes to a number of factors: the skill and brilliance of the artists who created them; their significance as memorials of key figures in British history telling the story of the Montagu family over three generations; and that, although each monument is a masterpiece in its own right, the combined importance of the four sculptures as a collection, is an exceptional illustration to the evolution of this artistic style in Britain over nearly a century.

If you haven't seen them, all of our Group would recommend a visit. The church will be open in August when Boughton House is open to the public.

### SPOTLIGHT ON ART APPRECIATION GROUP 3

Jane Morris

Our Group has enjoyed a full and varied programme during 2025. The members of the Group have each chosen a topic, an artist or a style, have done their research and presented a session each month from January to November. But as has become our custom, our December session is always a bit different.

This year we agreed on the theme of Celebration for our December meeting and members sent in their chosen images to be shown as a PowerPoint presentation and to talk about their selection – and what a wide range of images they proved to be. We began with a Norman Rockwell painting from 1956 called *Happy Birthday Miss Jones*. This was particularly appropriate as it was chosen by someone who has a birthday coming up shortly and was born in 1956. This was a taster for her Norman Rockwell presentation which we look forward to hearing in January. Another member shared with us her beautiful Silver Wedding celebration portrait – another very personal choice.

We love these sessions, as we are introduced to so many artists we have never heard of – such as Duncan Shoosmith who won Sky Artists Portrait Artist of the Year in 2019, which was celebrated by a commission to paint a portrait of Tom Jones, to hang in the National Museum of Wales. And how many of you have heard of the British contemporary abstract expressionist Alison Gilbert? One of our members introduced us to her painting which the artist herself had called "*Celebration*". It resulted in a lively debate around the room as to whether the shapes and colours successfully expressed the feeling of celebration as the artist had intended.

Two of our choices focused on Carnival as a celebration. The first was "*Dressing for the Carnival*" by the American artist Winslow Homer, painted in 1877 and spotted in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York by the member who had selected it. The painting depicts enslaved African Americans celebrating a festival known as Jonkonnu which had originated in the culture of the British West Indies. As a contrast, the second "Carnival" painting took us to Venice. It was by Scottish artist John Milne Purvis who had travelled to Italy in 1908 and captured the scene in his 1909 painting. His painting was full of movement and vibrancy as the figures danced around the floor. And whilst on the subject of dancing, we were also able to discuss a bronze sculpture we thought was by Rodin but was actually by his mistress, Camille Claudel. It depicts a man and a woman, locked in an amorous embrace as they dance a waltz.

We were also able to have a closer look at the work of an artist familiar to us all – Pieter Bruegel the Elder. His 1567 genre paintings, "*The Peasant Wedding*" and "*The Peasant Dance*" both depict a celebration, but also have a moral message, as gluttony and lust are seen in the paintings. Another artist known to us was Peter Paul Rubens. From about 1633, his painting "*The Garden of Love*" is a celebration of matrimonial love. It is also full of symbolism of love and loyalty, cherubs, doves and Venus. Doves featured in another of the group's choices, this time the painting "*Country Wedding*" by John Lewis Krimmel who had emigrated to Philadelphia in 1809 and painted the art work in about 1820. Above the couple is a cage with two doves billing and cooing, a symbol of wedded bliss.

One of the group has family in Denmark and she spoke about St Lucy or Santa Lucia, venerated as a saint in Christianity. She is celebrated on December 13<sup>th</sup> as the bearer of light in the darkness of winter in Scandinavia and as the patron saint of eyesight, the blind and opticians as stories suggest her eyes were removed. We were shown a painting by Tiepolo and a statue, with her eyes on a plate, as well as the procession in Denmark with a girl wearing a crown of candles to represent Santa Lucia.

Another of our members recalled this year's celebration – the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the world's first steam-hauled passenger train on a public railway – inspired by her grandson's love of all things train related. The first painting she shared was "*Opening of Stockton and Darlington Railway*" by John Dobbin who was ten in 1825. He was present as a child and 50 years later painted from memory Locomotion 1 pulling wagons filled with coal, flour and passengers across the Skerne Bridge. She compared that image with another painting with the same title by Terence Tenison Cuneo from 1949. A significant point in Cuneo's career was his appointment as an official artist for the Coronation of Elizabeth II which led us on to our last subject, the coronation of King Charles III. We were shown two works from the Royal Drawing School, both in celebration of the coronation of King Charles III. The first was "*Saluting the Crowds*", made up of 24 wooden panels, by Frazer Scarfe and the second was by Shana Lohery and depicted the Coronation Concert.

It was very interesting that not one of our members chose art works celebrating Christmas but we did round off the afternoon with some homemade mince pies, a great way to celebrate the successful conclusion of our 2025 programme.



# JANUARY'S QUIZ



Two very different and simple quizzes to ease you into the New Year:

**PART ONE:** The answers all contain the same letters arranged in two different combinations.

Eg: A **juicy fruit** that's **not expensive**    **Peach** and **Cheap**

1. A room with books and a computer that's not been cleaned for a while.
2. To put money aside to buy a container for flowers.
3. A domesticated hooved animal you can ride along the water's edge.
4. Roland, a TV puppet and his paintings.
5. You want to win this by running the fastest but mind where you go.
6. What causes spots and gives you stability to help you walk.
7. A person who goes to the bottom of the sea and how he makes a car move.
8. The third month could bring you luck.
9. I really like a small rodent.
10. A medical man likes his with chips.
11. A yellow citrus fruit and a water or honeydew fruit.
12. To start overeating.

**PART TWO:** How well do you know your advertising?

1. Should have gone to.....
2. It gives you wings.
3. Snap! Crackle! Pop!
4. Because you're worth it.
5. Have a break.....
6. Once you pop, the fun don't stop!
7. It's the real thing.
8. The ultimate driving machine.
9. Taste the rainbow.
10. You either love it or you hate it!

Answers to the Christmas Bumper Quiz:

**Part One:** True or False: 1. True – *Marley, the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present and the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come*; 2. False – *there were 364*; 3. False – *it is Capricorn*; 4. True; 5, False – *it used to be green*; 6. False – *it's 5<sup>th</sup> January*; 7. True; 8. False – *It was 1843*; 9. False – *it's made from Coconut oil, dried fruit, desiccated coconut and rice bubbles*; 10. False – *it was said to be a donkey*.

**Part Two:** Christmas movies: 1. Two – *Buzz and Jeff*; 2. The Polar Express – *Tom Hanks plays Hero Boy, Father, Conductor, Hobo, Scrooge and Santa Claus*. 3. 'Jump (for my love)' by The Pointer Sisters; 4. Bobby Helms – 'Jingle Bell Rock'; 5. Donald Trump; 6. Macy's; 7. Candy, candy canes, candy corns and syrup; 8. Optometrist; 9. A toymaker; 10. Hans.

**Part Three:** Christmas music: 1. 1994; 2. Bing Crosby – '*White Christmas*'; 3. "Snow is falling, all around me"; 4. 'When We Collide' by Matt Cardle; 5. 1934; 6. Thanksgiving; 7. Michael Bublé; 8. Annie Lennox; 9. 96!; 10. George Michael and Wham!

**Part Four:** Christmas food and drink: 1. Britain; 2. Japan; 3. A coin; 4. An orange or a tangerine; 5. On a Sunday, five weeks before Christmas; 6. Germany; 7. Clockwise; 8. Nut roast; 9. The German version of mulled wine; 10. 651 kg.