

NEWSLETTER for OUNDLE & DISTRICT

Edition Number 209
March 2026

If you would like to find out more about Oundle & District u3a,
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Registered Charity Number 1183800

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Spring is in the air, the snowdrops are in full bloom, the daffodils and other spring bulbs are almost out and, when the sun does shine – I know, quite rare this year so far – there is now some warmth. I know that many of you dislike the long, dreary, wintry days and even longer dark nights, so we can now look ahead more optimistically.

Talking of looking ahead, the good news is that we have someone willing to be nominated as Chairman and another to be Programme Secretary, so all very positive. I am not being deliberately secretive about who these members are, but, until we receive nomination papers, it is not a 'done deal'! We are still, however, looking for a Web Manager. Thank you, yet again, to our Group Leaders for reading Gill Phillips's letter to group members. With 600 members, there must be someone willing to take on this maintenance role! Gill will explain everything and give training, so please consider joining the team. She adds that the role usually takes about one and a half hours a month – so not a huge amount of time. New Members, don't be shy in coming forward. If you have recently retired, you will no doubt be up to speed with anything technical!

The other role (non-Committee) that we need to fill as soon as possible is setting up the projector and PA system for the monthly meetings. Ian will happily talk you through the set-up and he has produced an illustrated guide to help. Nearly all of our guest Speakers use the projector and the sound system so it is a vital job.

As you can see, with just over two months left for our present Committee, there is a lot being done to guarantee a smooth handover to the new Chairman and also to ensure that the new Committee is ready to go. If you think you can help in any way to lessen the load (thanks to the three members who have volunteered to deliver the hard copies of Newsletters), please get in touch with me. After all, u3a is all about volunteering!

Following last month's message when I mentioned simple pleasures, I received a few replies: being brought a cup of tea in bed; a round of golf on a sunny day; hugging a cat; the satisfaction of creating something; sitting by a real fire on a comfy sofa; doing word puzzles; a glass of wine; swimming in the river in the summer and, of course, reading a good book. It is not too late to send in your three simple pleasures!

Enjoy yourself as you learn, laugh, live!

Gill

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

MONDAY 13TH APRIL

Jane Wright or Roger

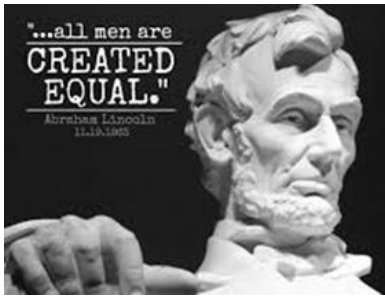
And the talk will be about

"Mary's Meals"

Queen Victoria Hall,
Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm
for tea/coffee and
biscuits

MONTHLY MEETINGS



There was another very good attendance at our Monthly Meeting on Monday 9th February when our speaker was Michael Burton, who delivered a fast-paced talk on “Abraham Lincoln’s America”. The large number of excellent visuals and their great variety gave us real insight into the history of America at that time and into the life of Abraham Lincoln, who was born on the same day as another giant of the 19th century, Charles Darwin. As well as enlightening us in depth about the American Civil War, Michael spoke about Lincoln’s warm and generous personality, his homespun rustic nature and his gift of writing beautiful prose.

Stuart Orme, curator of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon, will be the speaker at our Monthly Meeting on **Monday 9th March** on the subject of “**A History of Crime and Punishment in Peterborough**”. Stuart has worked in museums and heritage in this region for twenty-five years, many of them at Peterborough Museum. Stuart will reveal how bodysnatching became a premium occupation, that Peterborough was the last place in England to ‘read the Riot Act’ and who our best jail-breaker was! This talk promises to be entertaining and occasionally gruesome.



The speaker at our Monthly Meeting on **Monday 13th April** will be either **Jane Wright** or **Roger** from the charity “**Mary’s Meals**”. Their presentation tells the story of the charity’s humble beginnings in a shed in Dalmally, Scotland to becoming a global charity feeding over 2.4 million children in some of the world’s poorest countries. Their presentation is said to be ‘inspirational, moving, interesting and wonderful’.

Looking ahead to later in the year: By popular demand, **Monday 14th December** sees the return of the Oundle and District u3a DIY Christmas Extravaganza. After the resounding success of our Christmas 2024 DIY meeting, we just have to do it again! Once more we will be able to see our multi-talented members performing songs, plays, readings and tunes (and anything else they are willing to do) for our delectation and delight. Hopefully, this early advance warning will allow everyone to ‘get their act together’!

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.

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A new **Gardening Group** is in the process of being set up with the brief of (mainly) visiting private gardens (car sharing) with a bit of a twist. Some gardens often have more to them than meets the horticultural eye. The group will be keen to don walking boots, be prepared to cover their daily steps whilst sharing a desire to learn and discover new things in the company of like-minded folk. Green fingers not required; more a curiosity of plants and love of nature. Hopefully the group will be up and running by the time the leaves start to turn. Further details will be in future Newsletters.



A quick note to remind you that **Chinwaggers** next meets on March 26th between 10.00am and noon at the Talbot Hotel, Oundle and we will be back in the Snug.

A WINDOW ON SHAKESPEARE 3

Robin Yeomans

The Chairman's February Message set me thinking. The other day I mentioned to a friend that I belonged to a monthly u3a Shakespeare Group. 'You must be experts then' she said. I wanted to deny we were any such thing. But then I stopped and thought. I have a habit of keeping old diaries and so I checked how long we'd been meeting. I was staggered to find the first entry - 9th January 2013. So, more than thirteen years.

At the start we weren't experts by any means. But if you read, watch, discuss and see performed enough of Shakespeare's plays a drip-feed of expertise just happens. By the time we had reached our second decade, we had explored all the more popular ones and began nervous visits to such mysteries as *Troilus and Cressida*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Coriolanus* and other plays intriguingly called Shakespeare's 'problem' plays.

The experience was revealing. It's incredible how much Shakespeare was able to predict the kind of world we now live in. We have found history repeating itself: flawed politicians, populist democracy at work, received opinions overturned, problem gender relationships, So much to talk about that speaks of today.

And steadily the layers of friendship have developed, so that an inevitable chunk of catching-up time now nibbles at the plays.

But time does bring its issues. We shall soon have to decide what to study next when there are so few plays unread. Perhaps we need to begin at our beginning. We would probably unearth gems of understanding we never noticed first time round. And, of course, a Group changes as members come and go. Ours is now becoming in need of new blood and ideas. Perhaps you might be just the one to provide them. The seven of us meet monthly in one another's homes and would welcome your friendship. Do let me know.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE MAKERS GROUP

The first meeting of the newly formed Makers group took place on the 24th of February at Brian and



Jean Norris's house. After announcements and a friendly chat, Jean gave a presentation regarding the potential uses of a Cricut machine which can cut a large variety of card, paper, cloth and even very thin timber. A variety of samples was passed around during the talk. This was followed by Jean demonstrating the production of a birthday card.

Much discussion ensued, helped

along by lashings of tea, coffee and of course, a Makers Cake.

The meeting wound up at 4.30pm and whilst the date for our next meeting is the 24th of March, the venue and hence topic is still to be confirmed as at the time of writing.



SPOTLIGHT ON PHILOSOPHY GROUP

Michael Lumb

I had never studied philosophy before and am very much an enthusiastic amateur, but I joined this Group when it started to see if it would help me to make sense of what happens in our daily lives and our interactions with each other and the wider world.

I really enjoy the group and how the discussions are facilitated by the group leader. We meet once a month in a relaxed and informal setting. I find the conversations useful in interpreting past experiences and current events in our rapidly-changing world with its uncertainties and anxieties.

Participating in the philosophy group helps me to think critically about what others say and do, to challenge my own beliefs and attitudes, as well as those of others, and to develop my own sense of self and world view.

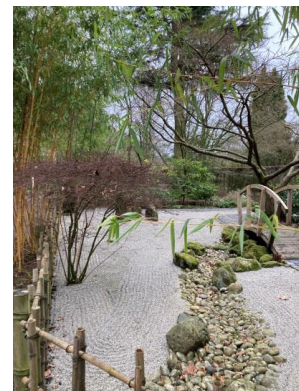
SPOTLIGHT ON GARDEN GROUP 3

We plan our year's activities at our January meeting every year, (although it's not cast in stone, as sometimes the weather gets in the way!) and February's visit is usually somewhere where they have a display of snowdrops. This year the Group's members chose to go to Barnsdale. We were fortunate to have a dry day, which, given the weather we have been having over the last few weeks, was quite a novelty. (*Rt: The Japanese Garden.*)

Founded by Geoff Hamilton, Barnsdale moved to its current site in 1983, when



he realised that he needed more space to "experiment" when he was presenting and filming *Gardeners' World*. It is now run by his son, Nick, and has 38 different gardens over an eight acre site and their website states that their inspiring range of garden styles and planting schemes have been referred to as 'a theme park for gardeners'. But the gardens are only beginning to waken and we had to use our imagination whilst reading the labels of their many plants and shrubs, as to what they will look like in the summer.



Nevertheless, we were there, primarily, to see the snowdrops and so after a very satisfactory lunch in their café, we set off in search of these beautiful flowers which give us hope that spring is just around the corner.

If you have any spaces in your Groups, please let Lidia know and she will have a note put in the Newsletter. And if you have any articles you would like to send in for the Newsletter, please send them to oundleu3newslettereditors@gmail.com and if possible, include a picture or two.

Information from the Committee meeting 2nd February 2026

We reviewed the December monthly meeting and unanimously agreed that for December 2026, we will revert to our Christmas Extravaganza, with entertainment provided by our members (see Programme Secretary's article for more details).

We finalised arrangements for the AGM and discussed what needs to be done for handovers.

Jane Fenton reported back on her meeting with other Publicity reps from the Network. She will produce an A5 poster for various locations, to go with our recruitment leaflets.

The August monthly meeting will be an Open Day, organised by the new Committee.

We reviewed and updated our Safety Statement (now on our website).

The next Committee meeting will be on 30th March. The main focus will be the AGM – the financial statement, final preparations and handover to new Committee members.



March's Quiz

Part One: All these are places that have hosted the Winter Olympics:

1. A very tranquil expanse of inland water.
2. A conurbation with sodium chloride in another expanse of inland water.
3. A floral tool to bang in a nail.
4. Public houses and a small river.
5. The sound made by a bear and an aristocrat or gas.
6. Queen Victoria's spouse in a French town.
7. A famous wizard near the ground.
8. Myself and an abbreviated form of local area network.
9. A shortened version of the name Caroline and a first name for Barlow or Oldman.
10. An inlet where the land curves inward and a Chinese dynasty.

Part Two: Fun facts – True or False?

1. Goldfish only have a three-second memory.
2. Lightning never strikes the same place twice.
3. Human teeth are as strong as shark's teeth.
4. A cloud can weigh over a million tonnes.
5. The Hundred Years' War lasted exactly 100 years.
6. The Great Wall of China is visible from the moon with the naked eye.
7. A group of pandas is called an embarrassment.
8. Bananas are berries, but strawberries are not.
9. The Eiffel Tower can be 15 cm taller during the summer.
10. Sloths can hold their breath longer than dolphins.

Answers to February's Quiz:

Part One: Did you get the total right?

1. One and Only = **1**; 2. Nineteen eighty four = **1984**; 3. 42nd Street = **42**; 4. One = **1**; 5. Three billboards = **3**;
6. They walked five hundred miles = **500**; 7. Ninety nine red balloons = **99**; 8. 15 minutes of fame = **15**;
9. Forty winks = **40**; 10. Three sheets to the wind = **3** – giving a total of **2688**.

Part Two: 1. 23 days; 2. The Snow Moon; 3. A badger; 4. Cupid; 5. Aquarius and Pisces; 6. A heart; 7. Valentine's Day and National Heart Month; 8. False – February was originally the last month of the year; 9. Amethyst; 10. China.