

NEWSLETTER for OUNDLE & DISTRICT

Edition Number 210
April 2026

If you would like to find out more about Oundle & District u3a,
take a look at <https://oundleanddistrict.u3asite.uk>
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Registered Charity Number 1183800

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Do you ever think back to *why* you joined our u3a? Was it because your friends had joined, you were interested in joining one of the groups, you thought the monthly meeting talks sounded interesting, it was a chance to meet new people or you had recently moved here and wanted to make new friends and get involved locally?

So my next question is: has our u3a met your expectations? I do hope so but, of course, as school reports often say – there is always room for improvement. We have a Committee to do the general organisation, Group Leaders to lead or manage groups and Members to attend the groups or meetings and sometimes to ‘step up to the mark’ with ideas or practical help. When it was first set up in Oundle in 2008, there was a huge amount of interest and I am pleased to say that interest has not dwindled and that we remain at a healthy 600 members. So u3a certainly seems to fill a need.

Another question: are you interested in the u3a movement as a whole? Most people aren’t, although they might occasionally look at the main u3a site. Within Northants, there are 12 u3as which meet as a network three times a year to discuss relevant issues, to share information from the Trust and from time to time to air our frustrations! I am the County Contact for Northants and I really enjoy this role, which I will continue to carry out once I come off the committee. The chance to discuss issues and compare notes is always a useful exercise, as we remember from our working lives; sometimes we might feel rather smug that we don’t have the problem another u3a has or we might hear about a new initiative and wonder why we hadn’t thought of it ourselves. Sharing ideas is vital in order that we don’t stagnate.

As with most national organisations, we are free to organise our own u3a as we best see fit for our location, demographic and facilities but we also benefit from the legal and financial support ‘from above’ and from the dissemination of ideas. So, are we getting it right in *our* u3a? How could we improve what it is offered? My aim is to leave Oundle and District u3a in a ‘healthy state’, with the prospect of lots to look forward to. So this is your final chance to let **me** know how you think we are doing!

Enjoy yourself as you ‘learn, laugh, live!’

Gill

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

MONDAY 11th MAY

**AGM
Followed by**

Steve Dimmer

And his talk will be about

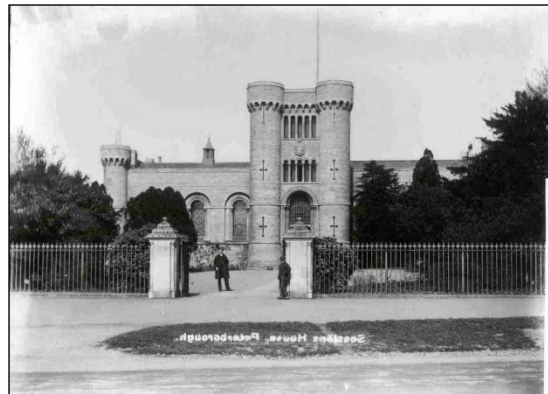
**“The Sound of Their
Music: Rodgers and
Hammerstein”**

Queen Victoria Hall,
Oundle

Doors open at 2.00pm
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biscuits

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Stuart Orme, curator of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon, was the speaker at our very well-attended Monthly Meeting on **Monday 9th March** on the subject of **"A History of Crime and Punishment in Peterborough"**. We heard about a Neolithic murder victim found at Flag Fen in 1976, the Prisoner of War camp at Norman Cross in Napoleonic times and what Charles Dickens thought of Peterborough, as well as the development of the police service and the prisons in the town. Stuart brought Peterborough's historical events alive and drew comparisons with contemporary times. As promised, his talk was entertaining and occasionally gruesome, but it was also very informative and thought provoking.



The speaker at our Monthly Meeting on **Monday 13th April** will be either **Roger** or **Jane Wright** from the charity **"Mary's Meals"**. Jane Wright is the Supporter Engagement Officer for Mary's Meals covering the East Midlands and East of England areas. Her job is to help grow the movement of this charity across the region through giving talks, supporting volunteers, running campaigns and events and organising fundraising. Mary's Meals is a UK based grassroots, low cost charity with a simple idea that works: by

providing a daily meal in a place of learning we can attract chronically hungry children into the classroom, where they can access the education that will hopefully one day lift them and their communities out of poverty. We believe that every child deserves an education and enough to eat!

On **Monday 11th May**, the speaker after our **Annual General Meeting** will be an old friend of Oundle and District u3a, **Steve Dimmer**. As well as being an established storyteller and playwright, Steve has been a professional magician and entertainer for thirty years. He has a range of over 50 illustrated talks that he regularly delivers to societies. This time the title of his talk will be **"The Sound of Their Music: Rodgers and Hammerstein"**, in which Steve says he will be examining the most successful song-writing partnership of all time in its melodic glory.



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.

oundleu3asecretary@gmail.com

If you have any spaces in your Group, 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 oundleu3anewslettereditors@gmail.com and if possible, include a picture or two.



A quick note to remind you that **Chinwaggers** next meets on April 23rd between 10.00am and noon in the Snug at the Talbot Hotel, Oundle.

SPOTLIGHT ON GARDEN GROUP 2



Our second visit of the year was to Kelmarsh Hall and Gardens and we couldn't have ordered a more perfect day. The sun was shining and, more importantly, it was warm.

Kelmarsh Hall in Northamptonshire was built in 1732 for William Hanbury, an antiquarian whose family owned the estate for eight generations. After a few subsequent owners, the Hall and estate were purchased by George and Cicily Lancaster in the early 1900s who left it to their son, Claude.

Nancy and her husband Ronald Tree rented Kelmarsh Hall from Claude from 1928 to 1933.

They paid no rent for their tenancy, but the terms were that they repair and improve the Hall.

During this time, Nancy, who was a keen gardener, brought much of the immediate landscape back to life. Some time later, after divorcing Ronald Tree, she married Claude and returned to the Hall in 1940s and, with the help of garden designer Norah Lindsay and landscape architect Geoffrey Jellicoe, continued to develop and restore the gardens.

Today a team of volunteers work all year round and, using photographs of the original gardens, and along with experts and Head Gardeners since 1998, continue to develop the gardens.



Our Group was admiring the Walled Garden when one of the Head Gardeners asked us whether we had been down to see the "Frost Gate". He explained that in English Walled Gardens there would be two gates: one facing south and one north and first thing in the morning, the gate facing south would be opened, followed by the north (the frost gate), the idea being that warm air from the open south gate would push the cold air out through the north gate, thus protecting the plants from frost.

As a garden of national significance and with all its history, they have a Grade II listing by English Heritage.

We spent a glorious hour and a half wandering around gardens, admiring the daffodils, hellebores and comparing the stages at which our gardens were in comparison, before enjoying a light lunch outside, where we could admire the view over the grounds. Kelmarsh is definitely a garden that needs monthly visits to see what the different seasons bring.



FREE MATURE DRIVERS EVENT – 27th April 2026 – Wellingborough.

Once again, we have the chance to go this Event and it's close to home this time. If you are interested, book early as tickets tend to go quite fast.

Are you a mature driver (aged 60+)? Live in Northamptonshire? Rely on being able to drive? This FREE event is for you! Driving is an important part of our everyday life and we (Northamptonshire Safer Roads Alliance (NSRA)) are keen to help to keep mature drivers driving safer for longer. Our driving ability changes over time for different reasons, especially as we get older. It's important that we recognise whether and how our driving is changing so we can stay safe and protect both ourselves and those around us. This Mature Drivers event is aimed at drivers 60+, and will cover all different aspects of driving. There will be FREE hints and tips drives available to book, which will be delivered by Northampton Advanced Motorists.

Our aim is to keep mature drivers driving safer, for longer. Book your free tickets via Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/northants-mature-driver-roadshows-4099083>

The event is being held at Darby House, Darby Close, Park Farm Industrial Estate, Wellingborough NN8 6GS (what3words.com///shaped.spice.span) with two sessions, 10.00am and 12.30pm.

Volunteers:

We are always looking for volunteers to help at the monthly meetings.

Refreshments

Could you help with serving refreshments once in a while? It is not an onerous task and is an excellent way of meeting members.

Setting up for the meetings from June onwards

We already have one volunteer to assist with this job in June, but it would be good to have one or two more helpers so that the same person is not on duty every month. Training and an 'Idiots' guide' provided!

If interested in either of these volunteering jobs, please contact: oundleu3achairman@gmail.com

NETWORK MEETING

Carolyn Traynor and I attended the Northamptonshire Network meeting on Friday 27th March at Scaldwell. This meeting was for Chairs and Membership Secretaries – Carolyn will be taking on this role after the AGM so it was useful for her to attend.

We were joined by one of our new East Midlands Council representatives. In fact the official announcement about Council reps will not be made until the beginning of April, so all 'very hush-hush!' John Perry, our PR adviser, also attended.

One of the topics in the full session was how to encourage men to join our u3as and there was lively discussion about the types of Interest Groups which appeal to men and also the fact that most of our Committees are predominantly female! This topic will be explored further at the June meeting.



April's Quiz

PART ONE: Rearrange the first letters of these answers for a two-word Easter treat:

1. What is the capital of Bulgaria?
2. Where is the birthplace of D H Lawrence?
3. What is the largest organ in the human body?
4. Which supermarket sells F & F clothing?
5. Where was the site of Napoleon's first exile?
6. What is the tallest living terrestrial animal?
7. What Welsh prefix means mouth of a river?
8. Who is the Ancient Egyptian god of the Sun?
9. What is the world's biggest island?
10. What is the first name of "Baby Spice"?

And the treat is? _____

PART TWO: Easter Trivia:

1. What animal is said to bring candy and eggs to children?
2. Which country is known for starting up the legend of the answer to No: 1?
3. What do the 11 marzipan balls on a traditional British Simnel cake represent?
4. What do children in Sweden and Finland often dress up as during Easter?
5. What does the cross on hot cross buns symbolize?
6. What are "Cascarones" in Mexico/USA?
7. In Australia, what native animal sometimes replaces the rabbit as an Easter mascot?
8. On what day is it a tradition to eat pancakes in the UK?
9. What is the name of the tradition where hard-boiled eggs are hit against each other?
10. Which city is known for its dramatic "Semana Santa" (Holy Week) processions?

Answers to March's Quiz:

Part One: 1. Lake Placid; 2. Salt Lake City; 3. Lillehammer; 4. Innsbruck; 5. Grenoble; 6. Albertville; 7. Oslo; 8. Milan; 9. Calgary; 10. Beijing.

Part Two: 1. False: they can remember things for months; 2. False: it can, and often does, strike the same place multiple times; 3. True: both have similar enamel strength; 4. True: due to the massive volume of water droplets; 5. False: it lasted 116 years; 6. False: it is not visible from that distance; 7. True: this is the correct, albeit weird, term; 8. True: botanically, bananas fit the definition of a berry, while strawberries do not; 9. True: the iron expands in the heat; 10. True: they can hold their breath for up to 40 minutes, whereas dolphins need to breathe every 10-15 minutes.