

# NEWSLETTER for OUNDLE & DISTRICT

Edition Number 211  
May 2026

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

## *In this edition*

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I cannot believe that this is my final Chairman's message! I worked it out that it is my 75th missive so many congratulations if you think you have read them all – you deserve a medal! Approaching the AGM, I do feel a mixture of sadness and a little regret, as I have loved this role, but also a sense of satisfaction and some relief!

I took over as Chairman in February 2020, which was then our AGM month, and a month later we were in lockdown! Looking back, I am amazed at how quickly we all adapted to holding committee meetings and Interest Group meetings on Zoom, where possible. The Covid days seem almost unreal now – the meetings of six people outside, keeping a two-metre distance, then being allowed to meet inside if socially distanced – and we mustn't forget that was the start of the dreaded Risk Assessments, which are now, for better or worse, here to stay.

So, what would I pick out as highlights since 2020? The increase in membership after Covid by running recruitment events and open days; the Mile-a-Member walking initiative which culminated in a county-wide event at Chester House, and our three Christmas Extravaganzas, which I am pleased to say will continue this year.

I apologise for all the secrecy about the new Chairman and other roles but, until the nomination deadline passed, we couldn't name names. However, as you will have seen if you have looked at the agenda for the AGM, I am now delighted to announce that Mark Quigley, a relatively new member of our u3a, will take over from me. He will introduce himself to you at the AGM and I am sure he has lots of new ideas to take our u3a forward. I know that you will support him in his new role and I hope he enjoys it as much as I have. After the AGM, there will be official changes to be made such as bank signatories, changes to those with access to Beacon, changes to the website and generic email addresses, so please bear with us.

At the risk of missing someone, my very grateful thanks go to Barrie Harbott, Jim Phillips and my husband Ian for setting up the PA system for monthly meetings; to the Refreshment helpers each month and to Peg Quiddington for taking over the rota; to Stephne Tewson for compiling and editing the monthly Newsletter throughout my time as Chairman and who is now 'retiring'; to Group Leaders for all they do and for allowing me to visit their Groups; to the present Committee who have been absolute stars, not forgetting former members Carol Sandall, Maureen Carter, Barry Lee and Barbara Ding. I also want to thank Ian for his patience and for the huge amount of help he has given me throughout my time as Chairman. Finally, a huge thank you to all of you for your friendship, enthusiasm and support.

I wish our new committee members – Mark Quigley, David Johnston, Tricia Shingles and Chris Wilkin – good luck in their new roles as they join the established and hardworking team of Lidia Douglas, Jane Fenton, Jane Hayward, David Tinsley and Carolyn Traynor.

Please come along to our AGM on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May and meet the new team. We will keep it as short as possible. Remember, we need to be quorate and you have the music of Rodgers and Hammerstein to look forward to!

I hope that you will continue to enjoy yourselves in the future as you 'learn, laugh, live'!

*Gill*

**MONDAY 11<sup>th</sup> 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  
for tea/coffee and biscuits

**MONDAY 8<sup>th</sup> JUNE**

**Followed by**

**Neil Hanson**

And his talk will be about

**"Inn and Out at the Top"**

Queen Victoria Hall,  
Oundle

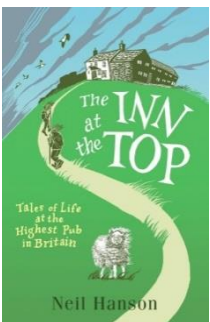
Doors open at 2.00pm  
for tea/coffee and biscuits

## MONTHLY MEETINGS



**Jane Wright**, Regional Development Officer, from the charity “**Mary’s Meals**” was the speaker at our Monthly Meeting on **Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April**. With the task of growing the movement of this charity across five counties in the East Midlands, Jane delivered a lively presentation including video clips of the charity’s work in Liberia and Malawi, two of the 16 countries where the charity works. Despite a low turnout on the day, a total of £259.90 was raised. Jane has emailed to thank Oundle and District u3a for their generosity and positive feedback, saying that this amount will provide 2599 meals or feed 13 children for a whole school year, bringing hope to them for a brighter future. You can visit Mary’s Meals website on [www.marysmeals.org.uk](http://www.marysmeals.org.uk)

We welcome back to our Monthly Meeting on **Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2026** a very familiar face to Oundle and District u3a. After our **Annual General Meeting**, **Steve Dimmer**, will talk on “**The Sound of Their Music: Rodgers and Hammerstein**”, with his usual mix of sound and video clips. His presentation will trace the team’s progress from their first hit, *Oklahoma*, and onward to *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, and of course *The Sound of Music*. But did you know that there are many other musicals penned by Rodgers and Hammerstein? Steve’s talk will look at those too. He tells us that this talk is a great crowd pleaser!



On **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2026**, our speaker at the Monthly meeting will be **Neil Hanson**, an award-winning speaker, storyteller and successful author with 70 published books to his name. As well as his own much-acclaimed work, he is a ghost writer whose clients include household names. Based in Yorkshire, he is a regular speaker at u3as all over the country and also entertains audiences at every type of occasion in the UK and in Australia, New Zealand and the USA. His humorous talk “**Inn and Out at the Top**”, narrates the quirks and foibles, highs and lows of his time running the highest inn in Britain back in the 1970s and 1980s.

**Looking ahead to later in the year:** By popular demand **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> May 2026** at 2.30pm in the Queen Victoria Hall, Oundle.

[oundleu3asecretary@gmail.com](mailto:oundleu3asecretary@gmail.com)

## Information from our Committee meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March

We welcomed Mark Quigley, David Johnston and Chris Wilkin to the meeting. Tricia Shingles had sent her apologies.

AGM preparations were finalised. The annual accounts were approved by the Committee, ready to go before the membership at the AGM.

Gill Potts reported back on the March Network meeting.

Various items of equipment etc will no longer be stored by Gill Potts, so these were delegated to relevant Committee members. The Asset Register will be updated by David Tinsley.

August monthly meeting – ideas were expressed but will be finalised at the next Committee meeting.

December monthly meeting – advance publicity to go via the Newsletter, asking for 'acts'.

The new Committee members have been having meetings with relevant members of the present Committee.

*The next Committee meeting will be on 1<sup>st</sup> June.*

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

Lidia Douglas [groupscoordinatoroundleu3a@gmail.com](mailto:groupscoordinatoroundleu3a@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](mailto:oundleu3anewslettereditors@gmail.com) and if possible, include a picture or two. Your new editor, Jane Fenton, would love to hear from you and I'd just like to say thank you to all who sent in articles and titbits to me for inclusion in the Newsletter over the 13 years I have been editing it.



A quick note to remind you that **Chinwaggers** next meets on May 28<sup>th</sup> between 10.00am and noon in the Snug at the Talbot Hotel, Oundle.



**STROLLERS** – a new Walking Group: This Group is for people who would like to go for a walk, but only about one mile and at a slow pace. It is designed to help those who use walking aids or want to get back to walking to increase their mobility. It will take place on the second and fourth Mondays of each month, starting at 11.00am. Initially, the walk will take place at Barnwell Country Park, meeting at the café and ending at the café for coffee and a cake. The aim is to go at a pace which suits everyone and have a great chat while we walk. Once the Group is established, we might try other places, but this will be for members to decide. As Group Leader, I will co-ordinate dates etc but leave everything else up to the Group. Anne Garraway

## FOCUS ON WEDNESDAY WALKERS and a broken stile

Recent dry sunny days have been perfect for walking and on 22<sup>nd</sup> April the Wednesday Walkers Group chose a route from Woodnewton via Southwick Woods, taking in a coffee break at the Shuckburgh Arms.



More importantly, we were delighted that the route included a new gate which replaced a broken stile we reported last year.

Anyone can report footpath (or pothole!) problems using Fix My Street. For local reporting go to <https://highways.northnorthants.gov.uk/>

- Enter a North Northamptonshire postcode, street name and area
- Locate the problem on a map of the area
- Enter details of the problem, including a photo
- Confirm the report and North Northamptonshire Council will investigate.

Jenny Munro



If you would like to join us, details are on the u3a Oundle and District website.

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE MILITARY HISTORY BOYS



In March we were fortunate to have a guided tour of the National Trust grounds at Belton House near Newark in Lincolnshire. The guide explained the significance of Belton House in both World Wars.

During a dinner at the beginning of August 1914, where Lord Brownlow was entertaining a special guest, his friend was called away back to London. That guest was Lord Kitchener and this was Britain entering WW1. Lord Brownlow was aware the German war machine was ahead of Britain in war technology and saw the expeditionary forces outgunned in the first few months. He contacted Lord Kitchener and offered to lease much of the lands in his estate to train battalions in the newly formed machine gun corps. The water cooled Vickers machine gun was critical in the new style of battle warfare and had a range of two miles. Hand-picked men from other battalions were drafted into the new corps and were trained in firing and tactics at a camp based on the Belton estate. It went from a tented settlement to mini-town within the first year, with proper barracks for the officers and men. It was equipped with everything needed, including a spur off the main line railway supplying the camp, social clubs, a picture house and its own police force, where the first woman police inspector was appointed to ensure the local ladies were kept in line. Every two months 20,000 men were given five weeks training before going to France. Over 150,000 machine gunners went through the camp before the war was over. The Vickers machine gun required a team of five soldiers to operate it and these guns were heavily targeted by the Germans, causing very high losses. It was an amazing enterprise and the gunners' tactics changed as the training was updated based on battlefield experience.

Belton was also instrumental in WW2, where it became the Headquarters of the RAF Regiment founded by Royal warrant in 1942. This is the specialist corps dedicated to security and delivery of air power and enabled the RAF to be independent of the Army, on which they previously had to rely.

We walked round the estate, led by a couple of excellent National Trust specialist guides who pointed out all the gunner firing sites and the remains of old buildings. We walked about seven miles and were blessed with a nice sunny day, so it couldn't have been better. It was a great day out for the Military History Boys and we learnt a great deal and had a splendid walk.

## SPOTLIGHT ON THE CAMERA AND COMPOSITION GROUP



Nine members of Oundle u3a Camera and Composition Group exhibited some of their own images in Oundle over the Easter period. On display was a variety of topics from wildlife to street photography, portraits and travel.

They were invited to join Share Photography at the Yarrow Gallery.

John Grubb, a member of both Share Photography and the u3a Camera Group, explained: "Share Photography is a small group of photographic enthusiasts who exhibit in venues local to Northamptonshire, with the simple aim of sharing images and conversations with each other and the general public."

The exhibition was a great success with many visitors enjoying both the fabulous photos and also taking the opportunity to talk to members of Share and the u3a Camera Group who were on hand and happy to chat through locations or techniques if requested.



In April, our Garden Group visited Briarwood, which is a garden for all seasons, with quirky original sculptures and many faces to be found around the garden.



Firstly, a south aspect lawn and borders containing bulbs, shrubs, roses and rare trees with year-round interest; hedging, palms, climbers, a wildlife, fish and lily pond, terrace with potted bulbs and unusual plants in odd containers. Secondly, a secret garden with garden room, small orchard, raised bed potager and greenhouse.

We received a very warm and welcoming reception from our hosts – Brian and Rosi. After introductions and speaking about their garden, they wandered round with us and pleasingly dealt with all our queries about the plants, the birds of which there were many, and all the interesting structures. This continued whilst they served cake and tea, the latter from a quirky little teapot.



This was our first garden visit for this year and, hopefully, will not be the last.



Briarwood is in the National Garden Scheme and Brian and Rosi were very keen to accommodate our request for a Special Arrangement visit on our u3a meeting date. The address is 4 Poplars Farm Road, Barton Seagrave, Kettering, NN15 5AF

We had a very enjoyable visit and strongly recommend a visit to this interesting garden.

### FREE MATURE DRIVERS EVENT – 18<sup>th</sup> May 2026 - Oundle.

Once again, we have the chance to go this Event and it's really 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, 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 Fletton House, Fletton Way, Glapthorn Road, OUNDLE PE8 4JA (what3words.com///self.cloak.tonal) with two sessions, 10.00am and 12.30pm.



# May's Quiz

## Twenty Facts about May. Do you know what they are?

1. What is the primary birthstone for the month of May?
2. Which holiday celebrated on May 4<sup>th</sup> is often called "Star Wars Day"?
3. Which sign of the zodiac applies to those born on May 10<sup>th</sup>?
4. What is the name of the traditional festival held on May 1<sup>st</sup> to celebrate spring?
5. Which flower is traditionally associated with the month of May, known for its small, white, fragrant bell-shaped flowers?
6. May 5<sup>th</sup> is known as which holiday, celebrating Mexican heritage?
7. What is the name of the meteor shower that typically peaks in early May?
8. According to the old rhyme, a "May birthday" is associated with what?
9. What day is often celebrated as Mother's Day in many countries, falling on the second Sunday in May?
10. Which famous English playwright often wrote about the beauty of May in his sonnets?
11. Which tennis Open Championship normally begins in the last week of May?
12. What are the two zodiac signs for the month of May?
13. May in the Northern Hemisphere is similar to which month in the Southern Hemisphere?
14. Historically, what sort of dancing has been linked to May Day celebrations?
15. Who did Queen guitarist Brian May marry in November 2000?
16. 'The Third of May 1808', is a painting completed in 1814 by which Spanish painter?
17. According to a 1732 traditional saying, what should you never cast till May be out?
18. What is the more common name for the Mayflower shrub?
19. In the nursery rhyme 'Nuts in May', on what sort of morning are the nuts gathered?
20. The Mayflower left England for the Virginia Colony with which other ship on the 15 August, 1620?

## Answers to April's Quiz:

**Part One:** 1. **S**ofia; 2. **E**astwood; 3. **S**kin; 4. **T**esco; 5. **E**lba; 6. **G**iraffe; 7. **A**ber; 8. **R**a; 9. **G**reenland; 10. **E**mma.

And the treat was – **EASTER EGGS**

**Part Two:** 1. Rabbit; 2. Germany; 3. The Apostles; 4. Easter Witches; 5. The Crucifixion; 6. Confetti filled painted eggs; 7. The Easter Bilby; 8. Shrove Tuesday; 9. Egg tapping; 10. Seville.