

May 2026

# Hunstanton u3a Magazine

learn, laugh, live

## Keeping our members in touch



Lovely arrangements by the  
Flower Arranging group.

*Please send in more photographs for our cover page. They  
need not have anything to do with groups' activities. They  
just need to be attractive!*

## From our Chair

Welcome to our monthly magazine. As you can see David has done a sterling job of revamping the newsletter into a colourful and enticing read. While you, our members, are sending him more articles so that we can have more of a magazine than a newsletter. Well done to all!

A huge "Thank You" must go to Sylvia who kept the newsletter going for so long, ensuring that we all heard about what was happening each month. I am sure that we all wish Sylvia a splendid 90th birthday as well as our congratulations.

The month of May is upon us, the year is running away. Two bank holidays to enjoy and the possibility of holidays to come. We look forward to summer, while enjoying Spring and all its beauty and freshness.

I am never sure whether the saying "Ne'er cast a clout 'til May is out" refers to the month of May or the May blossom on the Hawthorn tree. I have seen some beautiful cascading blossom on the Hawthorn hedges, but to be safe I am still wearing my thermal vest, probably until the end of the month!

Best wishes

**Hilary** (Joint Chair)

## From our Committee

### Our Committee Members

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Long-Standing Member (co-opted)	Sylvia Pratt	

By clicking on any email address in this list, you can email the committee member directly. Remember that you can also contact any member of the Committee by going to the Hunstanton u3a website and clicking on "Contact Us".

If you have an issue or query that you would like discussed at the next committee meeting, or wish to see the minutes of a particular committee meeting, please contact the Secretary with your request along with your full contact details.

Please note that, whenever a Committee member changes, the email address (and all past and future email correspondence) for their post goes to their replacement. This means that you need to change the entry in **your** email app's address book (or contacts list), otherwise the old name will show up on all future email correspondence!

## Groups Update

Since my last update outlining a number of potential new groups suggested by our members not one of them has sadly come to fruition. Although there has been plenty of interest it would seem that none of our nearly 400 members (with the exception of current group leaders who are a pretty amazing lot!) are interested in being Group Leaders. We are still awaiting someone who would be able to arrange a Spa day twice a year and if no-one comes forward then it appears that this popular group will cease to exist.

I've said it before and no apologies for saying it again – **WITH NO NEW GROUP LEADERS WE WILL HAVE NO NEW GROUPS AND WITHOUT NEW GROUPS HUNSTANTON u3a WILL WITHER AND DIE.** We are all in this together, there is no magical hierarchy, we are **ALL** equal. If you'd like to see a new group formed, either because you have an interest in learning about a specific subject we don't already cover or have a skill you'd like to share with your fellow members, then please think very seriously about becoming a group leader. If you'd like an informal chat about being a group leader then do let me know and I can assuage any concerns you may have about the role.

The bucket list group has folded due to both a lack of leader since Mark stepped down and a general lack of enthusiasm from members. Late last year I sent out an email on the subject and had some interesting feedback. Many of you felt that the concept of a bucket list was just that "a list of things you wanted to do and places in the world you wanted to go to before you kick the bucket". Others felt that items on the list could only be for adrenaline junkies. However, neither of these are the case but I've come up with an idea which you may find of interest.

Very often we all want to do something like see a show, go to the cinema, or have a local day out, but we don't want to do it alone and none of our friends and relatives wants to do the same thing. So,

if you want to see a specific show, film or have a day out then let me know and I'll try to match you up with another member or members so you can make arrangements between yourselves. This won't be a group as such but just a loose social arrangement. What say you all, feedback welcome (good, bad or ugly – I have broad shoulders)?

As you all know from the April newsletter, I'll be giving up the role of Groups Coordinator at the next AGM. I sort of accidentally fell into the role in early 2025 when the then GC fell ill. I've enjoyed my time as GC and have met some lovely people, some of whom have become friends. However, after eighteen months it'll be time to pass the baton on to some new blood with some new ideas of making the most of the role. So, if you fancy the role either on a solo or shared basis then do please let me know and we can have an informal chat about what's involved. I'll support you in any way I can up to October, and possibly beyond if needed.

I'd also be interested in hearing from anyone who'd really like to join a specific group but the day or time doesn't allow you to. It's possible to set up second or even third groups if there are enough members interested. And, lastly (do I hear a sigh of relief?), don't be put off asking to join groups with waiting lists, if there's enough members on a waiting list then we can also look to set up second groups.

That's my lot for this month – thanks for reading and I look forward to hearing from you all.

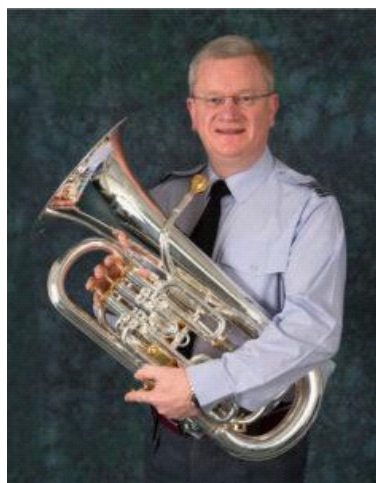
**Jacquie Y** Groups Coordinator Email: [groups@hunstantonu3a.org](mailto:groups@hunstantonu3a.org)

## Groups Co-ordinator Needed!

Jacquie, our Groups Co-Ordinator, will be stepping down from her post at our AGM in October. This is a great opportunity for you to become further involved in the running of Hunstanton u3a. Jacquie is more than happy to discuss informally just what is required and would work alongside any candidate/s to help them adjust. The Groups Co-ordinator role could be shared between two people.

**Hilary**

## April 2026 Speaker



The speaker, Kevin Mackie, son of member Mary Mackie, spoke about his nursing expertise on an earlier occasion and this time he regaled us with facts and anecdotes about a life in music. We were originally advised that the title of today's presentation would be *My Life in Brass* – but the range of instruments on display promised much more than that.

At age five, Kevin was given a recorder and began to play the tunes he'd heard on television and radio without teaching or help of any kind. A few years later he was thrilled to see a local brass band and a love for the euphonium was born. Kevin trained as a nurse with the NHS before joining the RAF, where he discovered plentiful opportunities to continue his music. This was best illustrated on the screen showing himself as a player in the Massed Bands of the Royal Marines at the De

Montfort Hall. This is but one of the vast range of bands, orchestras and ensembles Kevin has joined, managed or created.

Back to Kevin's musical versatility. The euphonium took pride of place among recorders, trumpet, trombone, tenor horn and guitar. He played each in turn, accompanied by stories about when and how he came to try them out. Kevin explained and demonstrated how each particular sound is produced. He is self-taught without exception.

However, the unexpected star of the show (Michael McIntyre watch out!), not because of its tone but because its size and



novel sound technique, was the didgeridoo. This huge ancient Australian instrument is played by circular breathing, a skill as fascinating to watch as to hear.

Kevin ended his presentation with a rendering of Carrick Fergus.

**Virginia**

## **An Occasional Editorial**

As our Editor, Sylvia's idea was to develop a magazine, rather than a typical Newsletter, and during Covid, she made that radical change. Over the past few years, Ian Holland has helped a huge number of us in the development of their websites (did you know that? - what a hero) and he tells me that there are very few of us who have gone further than just providing a standard newsletter. We should celebrate that we have something different, so I have decided to rename the Newsletter as *Hunstanton Us Magazine*. One valuable side-effect should be that more members will realise that it is not just a dry set of announcements but something worth reading and worth getting involved with.

At the same time as changing the name, I have made other slight tweaks: changing the typeface to something a little easier to read, especially on telephones and tablets; and using colour in the headlines.

Hopefully more members will read the magazine, but most important is that more members contribute to it. Sylvia had great difficulty in getting members to contribute. I am lazier than Sylvia, so I don't want to get heavily involved in agreeing with individual members what they could write about and then chasing them up to deliver. I need your help to avoid all that.

I decided that a bit of work from me now will save a lot of work later on. So, I have tried to set the ball rolling by commissioning book reviews – you will find reviews from each of our three book groups later in this issue – and a series of articles about members' lives before retirement along the lines of "My Life In/As". The first article in that series is by Mary Mackie, to whom I am hugely grateful for setting the ball rolling, and you will find it in this issue too. Some other members have also agreed to write about their former lives, so you should expect to read one each month for the next few months. But don't let it stop there! Hopefully, you too will be inspired to share your experiences and knowledge with your fellow members (remember: we are members, not customers) and we can keep the series going on for many months, even years, yet. Your contributions will save me a lot of work and help the magazine to be filled with interesting material every month.

We have one further regular feature for you. My wife, Sue, receives a regular report from Norfolk County Council's Trading Standards department which highlights newly emerging scams. Each month, her review in these pages will help to put you on your guard.

In our April issue, we set out a list of other possible subjects for you to write about. Please refer to that list and make your own contribution. Then we can make this a publication for us all to be proud of and, most importantly, something that we all look forward to and read every month.

**David**

## **From our Groups**

### **Travel**

#### **In the Footsteps of Van Gogh**

Eight members of the Travel Group set off for Provence to enjoy visiting places where Van Gogh had lived, worked and been in an asylum in his later years.

Four of us flew into Marseille to be met by Christophe, our delightful driver for the week, while the other four took the train south from Gare de Lyon, Paris to Avignon. We met up in St Remy at where else but Hotel van Gogh?



The group outside the Yellow House

That same afternoon we walked into town to meet Katherina who immediately took us to a café for much needed hot drinks. It was so cold there and we were expecting warmer climes. Gathering around his statue, we were interested to learn that Nostradamus was born here, he who wrote a book of prophesies some of which have come to pass.

Day 2 was a visit to Arles where Katherina produced some paintings and sketches for us to compare with the actual sites, like the famous 'Yellow House'. It actually wasn't the original but, in the name of tourism, a yellow façade is maintained. And the Hospital still in its original blue, white and yellow décor. Arles is also famous for its Roman history where we stood outside the arena, also

known as the 'bullring' as there is still a more gentle form of bull fighting, so we were told, held twice a year. We did not get to the museums but had a lovely lunch at Cuisine du Comptoir.

Day 3 we made our way to the market in St Remy but, again, the need to get out of the cool air called us into coffee houses. In the afternoon we walked up a long hill lined with flowering trees and a variety of architectural styles of houses to the Psychiatric hospital where he spent a year producing over 150 paintings including the beautiful *Almond Blossom*.



Van Gogh's *Almond Blossom* [source: Wikipedia]

On our way to Avignon on day 4 we stopped at a converted bauxite quarry to see an amazing Carrières des Lumières which transformed the vast enclosed mineral site into an art exhibition of Picasso and Frida Kahlo, with monumental projections on the walls that envelop you in images and sounds. It was quite overwhelming and a few of us resorted to the coffee bar for a bit of normality!

Then on to Avignon where we were greeted in a wonderful indoor market, Les Halles, where we were entertained with an excellent meal with different wines for each course, of course! A walking tour followed the meal. We stood near the Pont but we neither walked nor danced on it. But we learnt that it was the fields by the river that were used for the dancing, not the bridge at all, usually at a wedding celebration. Live and learn!

The pope's palace was another stop, and at last it was a warm day to enjoy tea out of doors on a street café. The following day, the 'flyers' and the 'trainers' set off for our return journeys very happy with our guide who had clearly planned and focused on our particular interest. It has left me with a wish to return to visit places and museums with more time to spare. We packed in so much in just 3½ days but we were all very grateful to John Stares for his meticulous planning and preparation for this u3a holiday.

**Christine**

## Creative Prose Writing

I was drawn to this group initially because it was introduced by openly inviting anyone interested in writing to come along, discuss the format they would like it to take and work the content from there. The way it was presented suggested an element of relaxed mystery which intrigued me. I was a little apprehensive because, as we all often do, I assumed that everyone else's capabilities would be superior to mine.

For many years I had enjoyed writing poetry, simply and secretly for my own pleasure, and I wanted to make an attempt to move on and write a story. I could tell a story reasonably well, but could I write one? I had no idea how, and I thought this may be an opportunity to find out.

I must admit that initially I was daunted by the technicalities, and each session I wondered whether to continue, but I did and am so glad that I did because in a short time we settled and arrived at a level that was all inclusive. Our group leader, Corinne, has made us very welcome in her home and works very hard in presenting the really helpful content of each session, illustrating not only the different techniques used by authors to hold the attention of the reader but also the many presentation skills applied throughout. We are encouraged to demonstrate these ourselves and discuss our attempts with each other.

We have the opportunity to contribute, question and comment and free read at each get together. I say "get together" because that's what we do, drawing on the strengths of each for the benefit of all. It is said that there is a story within us all, and it's also equally true that 'it's the way you tell them'. What better way than together with strangers who become friends. Instead of being daunted, I now look forward to every meeting and, who knows, maybe one day I might just write a story.

**Ann**

## Art Appreciation

### The Broderers Guild - Norwich Cathedral



The Broderers Guild in Norwich Cathedral is a dedicated group of volunteers who have been looking after the cathedral's stunning textiles since 1988.

We were very fortunate to have a tour of the Broderers workshop included in our recent tour of Norwich Cathedral on 8th April, and to see the fascinating work that they do. In two bright and airy workrooms we saw how they take care of and repair ecclesiastical textiles, as well as designing and making new frontals and vestments for use in the cathedral and elsewhere.

Alongside this work, the Broderers were chosen to take part in the creation of a modern-day 'Opus Anglicanum' – 'The Circle of Life'. Opus Anglicanum is the Latin for 'English Work' and refers to a highly prized style of medieval English Embroidery, particularly popular in the 13th and 14th centuries. As part of a group of twelve cathedrals across the country, the Broderers worked on a section of the two metre diameter special showcase piece of ancient craft work techniques going back 500 years, and it is hoped it will attract new volunteers to the existing Broderers teams in cathedrals.

A huge thank you to all of the volunteers who showed us their work and answered our numerous questions.

**Sally Cotton**



*There was a lot more to see at this splendid cathedral. Overleaf is a just small selection of the other sights on view.*



## French Conversation



Notre groupe francophone a Hunstanton u3a!

Bonjour tout le monde!

C'est peut-être le premier fois que vous avez été présenté avec un article en français dans ce journal. Je m'excuse.

Le but est a vous informer un peut de la présence des francophones ici a Hunstanton, est si vous, comme moi, souhaitez utiliser la langue un peu, dans un atmosphère amicale, cette groupe existe!

Entre nous, nous avons une gamme des capacités avec la langue. Moi, j'avais échoué mon examen 'O' level, mais après l'âge de 19 ans j'étais régulièrement en compagnie avec les gens français, sans aucune traduction. 'La Plume de ma Tante' était devenue bien utile dans ma vie. Pour vous aussi, si vous avez envie de rencontrer une langue que vous croyez disparue, dans l'amitié de notre groupe, vous seriez bienvenue!

Nous parlons pendant une heure et demi, un peu près, d'un sujet choisi en avance, mais on n'est pas obligé de participer, sauf qu'a votre niveau. Si vous êtes en difficulté, la groupe est la pour vous aider!! Il n'existe pas des devoirs a faire!

Pendant notre dernière réunion nous avons discuté le phénomène et des effets de trop de tourisme dans une petite ville a Mallorca qui s'appelle Soller, du nord de Palma, dans les montagnes. Nous y sommes allés pendant Pâques, et, après 30 ans d'expériences dans cette ville, nous avons décidé de ne pas rentrer. Les petits magasins historiques ont changer dans les noms fameux, les autobus touristique sont devenues pour dégorger ces clients pour la journée dans 'la ville la plus jolie de Mallorca', et les prix sont élevés en telle manière. Avec les soucis de l'aéroport en plus (pour nous 2,5 heures d'attente pour franchir la frontière espagnole après le EES) on peut s'imaginer de rester chez nous dans l'avenir.

Mais, il faut dire que les expériences des membres de notre groupe des voyages dans les quatre coins du monde étaient fascinant aussi!

### TRANSLATION

*Hello everyone!*

*This is probably the first time you have been presented with an article in French in this magazine. I apologise!*

*The aim is to let you know there are French speakers in Hunstanton, and if you, like me, would like to use your language skills in a friendly atmosphere, the group exists!*

*Between us we have a range of fluencies in French. Me, I failed my O level but after the age of 19 I*

*found myself regularly in company of French people, without the benefit of translation. 'La Plume de ma Tante' (School French) suddenly found a use in my life. For you also, if you would like to regain some of your French which you thought had disappeared, you will be welcome in our friendly group. We speak for roughly an hour and a half on a subject chosen in advance, but you are not obliged to take part except up to a level you feel comfortable with. If you get into difficulty the group is there to help you – there is no homework to do!*

*During our last meeting we discussed the phenomenon of over tourism in a small town in Mallorca – Soller, north of Palma in the mountains. We went during Easter, and after 30 years of experience in this town we decided we would not return. The small old shops had become large city names, the tour buses disgorged day trippers in 'the prettiest Town in Mallorca', the prices had shot up in the same way. With the difficulties at the airport (more than 2.5 hours of queuing for the Spanish frontier after the introduction of EES) maybe many will now stay at home in the future.*

*But it must be said that the experiences of other group members in the four quarters of the world were also fascinating!*

**Martin Chown**

## **Arty-Facts**

### **Portraits of Elizabeth 1st – a talk by Sally Cotton**

If you were to name the three most influential British women who ever lived, Elizabeth 1st would surely be one of them and Sally's talk explained to us the extraordinary way our internal image of her has been shaped.

From the very beginning I was taken from the dullness of classroom history lessons on the Tudors, back in the late 1950s, to the excitement of the symbolism of portraiture and how power forged by ambition was displayed in all its glory.

Roy Strong wrote:

The cult of Gloriana was skilfully created to buttress public order and, even more, deliberately to replace the pre-Reformation externals of religion, the cult of Virgin and saints with their attendant images, processions, ceremonies and secular rejoicing.

As Sally said, when Elizabeth came to the throne England was in a fragile state; her task was to stabilise things. How this was achieved was clever and sophisticated. She used the soft power of art to construct her persona. Her image was designed to project purity and authority. She considered herself 'married' to her people. Therefore her message (in modern speak) was "I am here for you".

One of the very early portraits of her before she became queen portrays a studious, quiet looking girl whose dress and finery seems secondary to her human quality. This is in contrast to all the later portraits bar one.

Of greatest importance was to create a cult of a strong queen, supreme and divine, and this was done by using symbolism in her portraits. Not only her clothes but the setting and also what she held in her hands conveyed ideas of justice, loyalty, peace etc. In addition, a timeless facial image was adopted; hence no weakness of age was ever allowed to be detected in her face.

This strategy of shaping the narrative gave the monarch control. Control was vital to this woman whose determination and intelligence in times of battling for security in all kinds of quarters, achieved a position of relative stability for many years.

Sally explained that the clothes she wore for the portraits were studded with jewels carefully chosen for the messages they gave out. For example, the Ditchley portrait by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger in 1592 shows an angelic, shimmering figure. The rubies, diamonds and pearls set in gold convey that she is a powerful, stable ruler steering England with divine guidance. Pearls were frequently used in that they emphasised her chastity.

The Armada portrait attributed to George Gower (1588) marks the naval victory over Spain. This image speaks of her maritime strength and imperialism. Her finger rests on a globe and points to Virginia in the USA. All around her are images of the sea – ships and a golden mermaid. She is



The Armada Portrait [source: Wikipedia]

beribboned and bedecked with pearls set in sumptuous gold-threaded, embroidered material. Her warmth, beauty and goodness are symbolised by her ruff that radiates out from her face as if she was the centre of the sun.

The final portrait that Sally showed us brought a gasp from her audience. It shows a completely different Elizabeth – no longer eternally young, she looks tired and old. Father Time is in the background with a skull.

This painting was done in 1610 after her death and so of course she never saw it. The mask has fallen and there was no longer the need to maintain the myth that was perpetuated in all the earlier paintings. It is not known who did it, but surely its importance is that it shows that quite soon after her death in 1603 that someone has

dared to point a finger at reality.

Sally reminded us of the complexity of her subject, and indeed this became more and more evident as she progressed with her talk. There is clearly so much more to discover, and I felt grateful that she had offered a new and exciting approach into learning more about this period of our history.

The 'awesome fantasy' of Elizabeth the First, manufactured so successfully, led Pope Sixtus V to say:

She is only a woman – only mistress of half an island – and yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by France, by Empire, by all.

So, yes, she for me is definitely one of my top three British women!

And oh how I wish I could have had the opportunity to see behind the painted mask to discover the real face of this highly unusual, intriguing and fascinating woman.

**Margi Blunden**

\*\* Further reading for those interested: *The Elizabethan Image* by Roy Strong.

## Book Reviews

### Book Group 1

***A Home From Home* by Rosie Hendry 2018 2.0/5 ★**



It's July, 1944 and Philly and Gracie, two Land Girls - women, really - are helping out at Cratchetts Farm, Norfolk. Philly lost her fiancé at Dunkirk and Gracie's husband is in the RAF. The farm is owned by Jacob and Florrie, their son, Ned and widowed daughter, Bea. This warm and cosy environment is disrupted by the arrival of 10 year old Jimmy, an evacuee from London, Edwin, an American airman and Benedict and Roberto, two Italian PoWs.

Jimmy is frightened due to a previous poor evacuee experience, Edwin is trying to find out about his mother's past in Norfolk and the PoWs are caught up in an illegal diesel racket. However, this is a Rosie Hendry book, which means nothing nasty happens, everyone is warm and supportive and it all turns out alright in the end (even though there's still a war on!).

Rosie Hendry is a very popular author of the heart-warming, family and friends relationship genre. The stories are up-lifting and reassuring, albeit unrealistic. The majority of the book group members felt that this was a very light and fluffy novel, with no real depth. There was no real sense of place, as the author concentrates on the characters emotions, although in a very shallow way. However, if you like an easy read to pass the time, this book is for you.

**Julie Barnes**

## Book Group 2

### *Persuasion* by Jane Austen



This month our book group was reading *Persuasion* by Jane Austen. What a delight.

The heroine is Anne Elliot the middle daughter of Sir Walter Elliot, a baronet of Kellynch hall in Somerset. As the middle daughter, Anne is not important and is passed over. Her elder sister Elizabeth is given precedence and favoured by her father. The youngest daughter Mary is married to Charles Musgrove, a gentleman and lives at Uppercross cottage

The baronet has an old family friend Lady Russell who likes Anne and advises her. Sir Walter has lived well beyond his means and decides to lease out Kellynch hall and move to Bath, a town that Anne dislikes but she has no say on the matter.

While this move takes place, Anne goes to stay with her sister Mary at Uppercross cottage where she can help with the two young boys.

At Uppercross village the Musgrove family live in the Great house. The family at home consists of the mother and two daughters Louisa and Henrietta.

Meanwhile Kellynch hall is leased to Admiral and Mrs Croft.

The narrative developed from these characters. It turns out that Anne, when young, had fallen in love and become engaged to a naval officer named Charles Wentworth. He, however, had no social standing and her father and Lady Russell had so strongly disapproved that Anne had been persuaded to tell him she could not marry him.

Throughout the book, the effect of social standing is very pronounced. It is obvious that a baronet with a title and inherited land is far superior to an Admiral who could have been only a parson's son and who has made his way by his own endeavours.

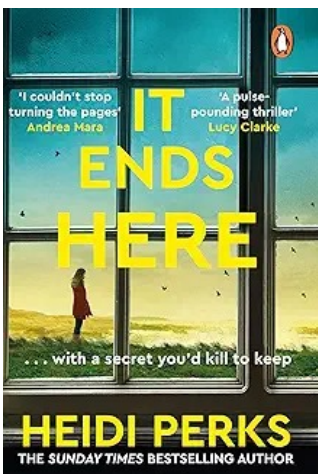
It turns out that Admiral Croft's wife is sister to Charles Wentworth who has done well in the navy during the Napoleonic war and is now a wealthy Captain. The embarrassment which Anne endures when she encounters him socially and the obvious hurt which he received when she rejected him form the theme of the book.

The nuances of social standing and how feelings are conveyed for me are the charm of the book. Jane Austen is a master in conveying Anne's thoughts and feelings towards the members of her family and circle. I enjoyed every word.

**Marian Rowe**

## Crime Book Group

### *It Ends Here* by Heidi Perks



7 a.m. on a weekday morning in March on the Isle of Wight. Jennie opens The Boatyard café. A local is sitting on his boat moored in the marina enjoying his morning coffee and bacon butty. He sees four people enter the cafe at different times – two men and two women. At 7.30 a.m. he hears a gunshot inside the cafe and immediately calls the Police. At first, the Police think he may be mistaken – maybe it was a car backfiring? However, the witness is ex-military and knows exactly what he heard.

The Police are desperately trying to understand what is happening, but the landline to the café has been disconnected and they have been unable to make contact with anyone inside. The two men are identified quite quickly as their cars are parked outside the café, but their wives are unable to throw any light on why they were in there. Daniel lives on the Island and is a crime book writer. His wife thinks he may have gone there to write, but then discovers his laptop is still at home. Jacob's wife thinks her husband was at a meeting on

the south coast and has no idea why he is on the island. Neither wife has ever heard of the other man nor Jennie but they were at the cafe that morning and is one of them the hostage taker or a hostage? Needless to say their mobiles are switched off too.

A husband comes forward as he thinks his wife Eleanor might be in the café as she meets the description the witness gave of one of the women entering it, and he has since found out Eleanor asked her mother to take their sons to school rather than take them herself. Why would she do that and why was she in the café?

As the hours go by the Police think there must be something that links the people in the cafe but they have yet to ascertain who is the hostage taker and who are the hostages? Also, they need to find out who the other woman is.

Gradually, as the Police chip away at the information they have on the people in the café they find a link between them and they have to now work out how to end the siege without anyone getting hurt.

This is Heidi Perks latest book and I think her best. It was fast paced and a real page turner. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

**Susan**

## From our Members

### Write, Said Fred

Actually Fred had nothing to do with it. It was David, our Newsletter editor, who asked me to write a piece (*rf.* his article in the April Newsletter). How did I become an author? Well, I got some paper and a pencil...

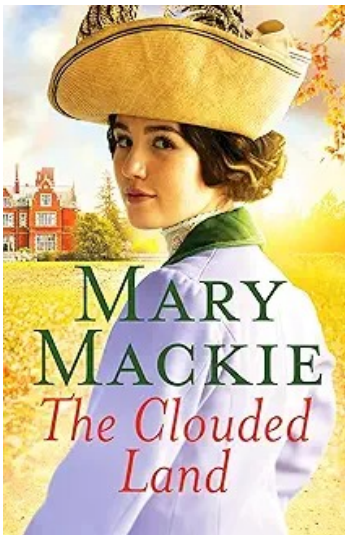
There was I, at junior school in Lincoln, never been further than Mablethorpe, with a vivid imagination and a head full of stories about things of which I knew nothing. Among many unfinished fragments, I recall 'The Life of a Missionary' (in darkest Africa) and another set in Tibet, titled 'The Wilfulness of Wheng Tsu'. (Don't ask!) However, I did wonder if I might have some small talent for words when a teacher gave me 11/10 for an essay, when I was nine years old. Mind you, she corrected me when I wrote that something grew to be big, huge, enormous... 'Too many adjectives all meaning the same,' she advised. Even then I knew she was wrong, because what I had meant was it grew to be big... no, huge... no, enormous! I hadn't expressed it well, but I still think the idea was right.

I also wrote poems. And musical plays which my sister, cousins and I performed for our own amusement. My mother, bless her, sent some of the poems to the BBC. They didn't invite me to Broadcasting House. Not then. Later there was TV, Radio, interviews with newspaper journalists...

A pad and pen were my essential companions, even on outings and holidays, much to my parents' despair; staying in and scribbling was far more interesting than visiting relatives or driving round the Lake District. My ideas turned into complete stories, mostly derivative stuff based on TV shows and full of girlish ideas about romance. Miss Ryder, my English teacher at Lincoln Girls' High School, kindly read some of these efforts and encouraged me to continue.

In my first job, as a junior clerk, I was persuaded to read my stories during lunch for the girls of the typing pool. I certainly loved sharing my work with them, though I didn't fancy becoming a short-hand typist myself. My secret wish was to join the Royal Air Force some day. Lincoln was surrounded by stations: Scampton with the Red Arrows, Waddington with the huge V-bombers, and Swinderby training station not far away – boys in RAF blue were a frequent sight. I discovered there was a new thing called the 'Local WRAF': girls could join, do six weeks' training at RAF Hawkinge in Kent, then work at their local RAF base, wear the uniform, do the duties, but still live at home. That suited me fine. I loved working at Waddington and soon had my first flight, in an Anson, all the way out to Skegness and back. Exciting! I might have gone on and joined the regular WRAF except that a certain Chris Mackie was posted in. I became a wife, and then a mother to two small boys. We moved around a lot, in Germany and across Britain. And I kept on writing.

As the years passed, my ideas outgrew the short story form. I doubted my ability for writing proper novels, but when I tried it I loved it. So much more scope to let characters develop and plots thicken, not to mention space for description of people, places, seasons (readers now often comment on the



One of many! This is from 2021. I've read this book, and it's lovely - David

vividness of my backgrounds, which is wonderful to hear). I began to send my work off to publishers and eventually, five full-length novels and several years later, one of my books was accepted. The advance was... £50. Authors earnings are sadly exaggerated. The wealthy ones are the ones you've all heard of. Below them there are thousands (literally) of lesser known scribblers, many of whom need a day job to make ends meet. However, the thrill of seeing one's work turned into a proper book, on sale in shops and available in libraries, almost compensates.

My first book, 'Robin's Song', came out in 1972. After it came forty-odd similar stories, all from my original publisher, suspense and mystery-romances with crimes involving spies, fraud, assault and even cattle-rustling in darkest Lincolnshire! Moving around with the RAF gave me lots of marvellous backgrounds to use. The books also appeared in paperback, as newspaper serials, and in many foreign languages, including Hebrew and Hungarian. I'm particularly popular in Scandinavia for some reason.

Several non-fiction books followed, on various subjects, and after flirting with a few sexy romances I moved on to more serious Victorian sagas, set mainly in Norfolk, which by then was our home. Research for these books,

and for the non-fiction, provided us with even more adventures and gave us reasons to visit unusual places, often with mysteries to solve. Oh, the delights of the National Archives in Kew and the British Library near King's Cross. As for the Royal Archives, high up in the Round Tower at Windsor Castle... Wow! But that, as they say, is a whole other story.

Another delight has been invitations to speak at all manner of places, from freezing church halls with eight people in the audience (one asleep most of the time) to the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham for a grand lunch with hundreds of International Soroptimists, guests including Birmingham's Lord Mayor and his Lady. More stories to tell! Unfortunately, I'm running out of space. And I haven't even mentioned my plays... Oh, well.

Yes, I'm still writing. They tell me Victorian sagas are not selling well at present so I'm having fun trying 'something completely different' – a fantasy-adventure about flying horses. Oh, sorry, they object to being called horses. They think of themselves as 'flēogen'.

See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Kingdom/Mary\\_Mackie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom/Mary_Mackie)

**Mary** (I do love an ellipsis...) **Mackie**

## We Love Our Beaches

### Sunday 12th April



Old Hunstanton Beach [source: ExploreNorfolkUk.co.uk]

After a sunny, blustery couple of hours, the Old Hunstanton beach had 25kg (55lb) less litter and debris. For a comparable weight think large labrador, small child, or heavy holiday suitcases.

As part of the volunteer beach cleaning group, we collected items ranging from the annoying, to the unpleasant, to the potentially dangerous to the environment.

- Some debris was washed up – fishing rope, line, and bits of nets
- Some lost - swimming goggles, t-shirt, towel, shoes, plastic beach toys
- Some thrown away or left – old packets, glass bottles, cans, vaping paraphernalia, tiny plastics, and wet wipes. Plus, lots of cigarette butts and dog poo bags. Yep – yuck!

This was our third beach clean with the Fish Net Zero team. We gathered with other volunteers at the Hunstanton Old Beach Café, collected the provided litter pickers and bags, received our safety briefing, and set off in different directions to scour the beach. For the bird watchers among

you, we kept a good distance from the roped off area for the plover nesting.

So why do we spend time picking up other people's rubbish? From our personal perspective, there's lots of negative "stuff" in the world that we can't do anything about, so we do something that has a positive impact, however small. Or, put more eloquently – *it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness*. Plus, we get some exercise and fresh air with fun people on a beautiful beach!

If you're interested in supporting an organised local beach clean, below are two groups we've volunteered with, there are probably more. If you can't commit to two hours, the organisers are always clear that they're grateful for however much time you can give.

**Fish Net Zero**: Backed by the \*Green Britain Foundation, Fish Net Zero recovers abandoned fishing gear, frees entangled wildlife, and protects marine ecosystems around the UK. For upcoming beach clean dates visit the [Fish Net Zero Facebook page](#).

**Norfolk Beach Cleans**: A not-for-profit organisation where like-minded people can work towards the same cause. There's a Heacham Beach Clean on 23rd May, [future dates are on their website](#).

\*The [Green Britain Foundation website](#) gives information on their other projects including eco-education and re-wilding.

See you on the sand!

**Julie & Bill**

## Truth or Lie?

"So, it's true!" exclaimed Arthur.

"No, how could it possibly be true?" sighed Leonard, settling more comfortably into his favourite armchair. If this was to be another of Arthur's truth or lie sessions, he needed to prepare his sciatica.

"Well, I've seen loads of photos online. Look, you can clearly see its fin, nose, and everything." He pushed his phone closer to Leonard's obviously sceptical face. "It's really swimming in the lava. And! Theresa swears it's true. A friend of hers said she saw something like it when she went to Hawaii. They have volcanoes in Hawaii." Arthur paused, mouth quivering somewhere between a firm line of confidence and a smile.

"Yes, but that photo doesn't make it actually true." Pointed out Leonard in his practised voice of reason.

"They have volcanoes in Hawaii" stated Arthur, building his case.

"True, they do have volcanoes in Hawaii." Leonard immediately regretted using the 'true' word.

"And there's a volcano that's erupting." An eager glint appeared in Arthur's eye.

"Yes, there is a volcano erupting," Leonard reluctantly agreed.

"So, there could be a dolphin swimming in the lava," retorted Arthur with a 'I rest my case M'lord' triumph.

"Nope. No dolphin is swimming in the lava. No dolphin has ever or could ever swim in lava that's at least five times as hot as the oven you cook your Yorkshire Puddings in. Someone has used AI to create a photo to look like it." At this point, Leonard thought it important to be definitive.

"I've just donated £50 to Save The Lava Dolphin for nothing then?" scowled Arthur, shoving his phone into his back trouser pocket.

"Quite possibly, but I'm sure your money will go to help other dolphins," placated Leonard.

"What about the penguins?". Hope swelled anew in Arthur's voice.

"Penguins swimming in lava?" Leonard's eyebrows edged closer to his hairline.

"No, three penguins are adrift on a shrinking iceberg and there's a starving polar bear on the same iceberg! They only have hours, perhaps minutes to live!"

"Couldn't the penguins just hop into the water to escape? They're excellent swimmers."

"I guess my £25 to save the penguins was another bad idea," sighed a defeated-sounding Arthur.

"Probably." Leonard regretted his bluntness when he saw Arthur's shoulders slump dramatically, but couldn't resist asking "So you value one dolphin more than three penguins?".

“No, not really, I do like penguins, but I saw the lava dolphin first. And I like the way dolphins smile, talk, and rescue fishermen through their innate kindness.”

“Good to know you have priorities and a sound grasp of dolphin folklore” said Leonard, getting up from his chair to make more coffee and put an end to this topic of conversation.

Arthur's voice followed him as he headed out of the room. “Yeah, I’m really not into reptiles. When I saw there were only two Static Flying Lizards left on opposite sides of the world and Matt needed money to bring them together so the species didn’t die out, I only gave a fiver.”

Turning with a witty repost on the tip of his tongue, Leonard saw Arthur lounging contently on the sofa, feet propped up on the coffee table ostensibly reading yesterday’s newspaper carefully folded to reveal the headline, “Shamed Scammers Outwitted by Senior”. Saving his clever quip for another day, he headed towards the booze cupboard instead.

Leonard enjoyed these bizarre conversations with Arthur but, as with the wider world these days, he was never quite sure which bits to actually believe. As he reached for the single malt, an uncharacteristically fanciful part of him wanted to ask Arthur if he knew whether the Static Flying Lizards were one male and one female to make the journey worthwhile.

\*\*\*\*\*

But seriously....

Arthur's feigned gullibility is obviously fictional and very much exaggerated, but it is a fact that retirees and seniors are increasingly the targets of AI scams.

Last year, over 1.8 million over-65s were victims of fraud, losing an average of £831, and some much more.

Current scammers are generating increasingly realistic and convincing text, images, and even voices – much more believable than a dolphin in lava.

For tips on how to stay safe, visit the National Cyber Security Centre’s Campaign Against Fraud site: <https://stopthinkfraud.campaign.gov.uk/>

For more information about what you can do with AI, visit u3a’s AI for Everyone site <https://u3acomunities.org/interest-groups/computing/ai-for-everyone/>, and the Silver AI Project for a short free AI course: <https://www.silveraiproject.com/>

**Julie Haggith** Creative Writing Group

**Bill Freitas** former Cybersecurity and IT Director

*...and while we are on the subject...*

## Beat the Scammers

It is a sad state of affairs that the majority of fraud now occurs over the internet. For example, financial fraud and online crime costs the UK over £2 million pounds every day and it's growing every year as the scammers are getting more and more sophisticated. However, there are many more ways you can be scammed and in these regular articles I will try to make you aware of some of the ways you may fall for a scam and tell you about current scams reported by Norfolk Trading Standards.

One of the current scams from Trading Standards is a **Rogue Trader Alert for Doorstep Cold Callers**. These cold callers are claiming that they can see issues with your roof.

Trading Standards advice is:

**Never** deal with cold callers looking to undertake work on or around your property

**Never** agree to have work done by somebody who is 'just passing' or 'happen to be working in your area'. Don't take their word that the work needs to be done at all.

**Never** allow a cold caller access to your home, roof or garden, even if they are offering to do tasks for a small fee or free.

**Never** pay for work before it is completed or give part payment to get materials.

When you are looking to have work done on or around your property deal only with reputable

companies you have researched and chosen yourself. Always ask for and agree a written quotation before starting the work. Remember an estimate is not a quotation. An estimate can be changed, a quotation can't.

If at any time you feel uncomfortable, intimidated or are concerned for vulnerable neighbours, call 999 and if you see cold callers operating in your area please contact the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133 or Norfolk Police on 101.

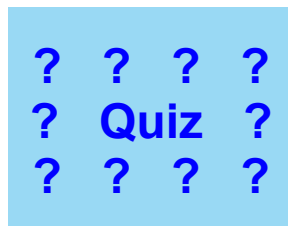
### Other Alerts for Norfolk

A current **telephone** cold call concerns Loft Insulation.

**Scam Alert** - Fake Parking Charge Notice messages.

Always remember you do **not** have to make up your mind on the spot. If you are pressured say No or that you have to discuss it with a family member. And finally, you can get more information from NCC Trading Standards Consumer Alerts page on the internet.

### Sue



## UK v US – Two-Countries-Divided-By-A-Common-Language Quiz

1. UK temperatures are expressed in Celsius, which is based on the freezing (0 degrees) and boiling points (100) of water. In the US, Fahrenheit is used. What was the original basis for the 0 degree mark on the Fahrenheit scale?
2. Both countries use "pints" for beverages, but they aren't the same size. How many fluid ounces are in a US pint compared to a standard British (Imperial) pint?
3. If a US recipe calls for "eggplant", "zucchini" and "rutabaga," what equivalent items would you be looking for in a UK supermarket?
4. If a New Yorker tells you to stay on the "sidewalk" to avoid cars, what equivalent term would be used in Hunstanton?
5. The UK officially began its transition to the metric system in the 1960s. However, one specific area of measurement remains strictly Imperial to this day, matching the US standard. What unit of measurement is it, and where is it used?
6. If you order a "cider" in the US, what would you likely receive?
7. Americans spell and pronounce it "Aluminum" (four syllables), while the British use "Aluminium" (five syllables). Which of these was the name used by the element's British discoverer, Sir Humphry Davy, in 1812?  
Extra credit: Why does the UK use "Aluminium" (five syllables).
8. Americans are often criticized for using the word "Soccer" instead of "Football." Where was the word "Soccer" actually coined?
9. In a business meeting, If someone from England proposes to "table" a motion, they want to bring it forward for immediate discussion/consideration. If an American proposes the same thing, what do they want to do?
10. The United States famously has a single, codified written document as its Constitution. The UK is one of only a few countries in the world that does not have a single written document. What is the technical term for the UK's type of constitution?

*Answers are at the end of this Magazine*

# Forthcoming Meetings

All meetings start at 2:00pm

- 18th May** **Songs of Norfolk** performed by Chanter's Jigge. Songs, ayres, jigs and jollies from around Europe and across the centuries, played and sung with ancient, traditional and modern instruments.
- 15th June** **Ghosts of the Norfolk Broads**, a talk by Wally Webb. Tales and fables that happen at the water's edge across the Broads.
- 20th July** **Antarctica** by David Pinion. He first went to Antarctica in 2023 and his talk his experiences and impressions of this incredible continent.

For more detailed information about these meetings, please visit the Events page of the Hunstanton u3a website: <https://hunstanton.u3a.site.uk/events/>

## Admin...

### Welfare

If you know of any member who is ill or has recently suffered a bereavement please contact Karen, our Welfare member. Karen will then send a suitable card from the u3a. Email [welfare@hunstantonu3a.org](mailto:welfare@hunstantonu3a.org)

### Change of Circumstances

If you change your address, telephone number (landline and/or mobile) or email address please ensure that you pass the new details to [memsec@hunstantonu3a.org](mailto:memsec@hunstantonu3a.org)

### Magazine Copy Date

Items for the next magazine are required by MONDAY 8th JUNE 2026. Please send them to David at [newsletter@hunstantonu3a.org](mailto:newsletter@hunstantonu3a.org). You will receive an acknowledgement of your contribution. Please submit them in WORD or odt (e.g. from Libre Office) as email attachments. Or you can simply type your text into an email, and I will extract and format it for publication. **No PDFs** please.

Photographs are more than welcome, on their own or accompanying articles. Just attach them to an email.

**Thank you** to everyone who has contributed to this issue.

More please!

## Answers to the Quiz

1. **A Brine Solution:** The original basis of 0 degrees Fahrenheit (0° F) was the coldest temperature Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit could reproduce in his laboratory, which he achieved using an equal-parts mixture of ice, water, and ammonium chloride (a salt).
2. **16 oz v 20 oz:** A British pint is 20 imperial fluid ounces; a US pint is 16 US fluid ounces.
3. **Aubergine, Courgette, Swede (or Swedish Turnip)**
4. **Pavement**
5. **Miles:** The UK still uses miles and miles per hour (mph) for all road regulation.
6. **Apple Juice:** In the UK, "cider" is always alcoholic (equivalent to US "hard cider"). The US version of cider is non-alcoholic, freshly pressed, often cloudy, apple juice, and typically found at markets and farm stands only in the fall.
7. **Aluminum:** Sir Humphry Davy originally suggested *alumium*, but changed it to *aluminum* in 1812. British editors later added the "-ium" to make it sound more like other elements (magnesium, sodium, etc.).

8. **England:** It originated at Oxford University in the late 19th century as a slang abbreviation for "Association Football" (Assoc → Soc → Soccer).
9. **Postpone it:** In a business meeting, if an American proposes to "table" a motion, they want to postpone it.
10. **An Uncodified (or Unwritten) Constitution:** It is a collection of various laws, court judgments, and treaties rather than a single document.

**That's all, folks!**