

September

Hunstanton u3a Magazine

learn, laugh, live

Keeping our members in touch

*An exhibit from the
Old Hunstanton
Flower Festival,
snapped by Jill
Davis. Her
comment: "So clever
and so different".*



*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 Autumn!

I think this could be my favourite time of year. I can put my vest on, wear layers of clothing and feel snug and warm in a coat!! My problem with summer is once you have got down to one layer because it is so hot, there is nowhere else to go, only be too hot. Whereas in the Autumn you can regulate your temperature with what you wear.

Please let me give an apology from last month's magazine. I talked about scams and said about the TV licence scam I received. In the end I received six emails purporting to be about my licence; interestingly my TV licence was actually up for renewal – how do the scammers know? Anyway, I digress; my apology is that I wrote "I know that the TV licence is obtained from a government website with gov.uk in the address" and I apologize because I was wrong. TV licences are obtained via the official website www.tvlicensing.co.uk

The week of 19th to 27th September is "u3a week" and national u3a, www.u3a.org.uk, is planning a brilliant line-up of online talks and events for you. This year's theme is *expanding horizons* and the idea is that they'll be asking people to expand their horizons and try something new just for fun.

Best wishes

Hilary

From our Committee

Our Committee Members

Role	Name	email
Chair	Hilary Farrell	chair@hunstantonu3a.org
Vice Chair	Angela Blenkinsop	vicechair@hunstantonu3a.org
Secretary	Virginia Young	secretary@hunstantonu3a.org
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Events Co-ordinator	Verity Mitchell	events@hunstantonu3a.org
Webmaster & Beacon Admin	Ian Holland	web@hunstantonu3a.org
Publicity	Verity Mitchell	publicity@hunstantonu3a.org
Speakers Secretary	Ann McKimm	speakers@hunstantonu3a.org
Groups Co-ordinator	Jacquie Yaxley	groups@hunstantonu3a.org
IT	Norman Mitchell	it@hunstantonu3a.org
Magazine Editor (co-opted)	David LeMoir	newsletter@hunstantonu3a.org

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!

AGM on October 19th

The documents for the AGM are now on the website [here](#)

Two committee vacancies exist: Groups Coordinator and Publicity. A Nomination Form is included in the documents and should be returned by October 10th to the Secretary.

The date of the meeting is at 2:00 pm on October 19th, all members are urged to attend as we need to make important decisions for our u3a.

The meeting will be followed by "Tea & Cake", to celebrate our 35 yrs as a u3a, and a Quiz.

All committee and group leaders will be wearing their badges, to enable you to identify them so you can address any concerns and/or requests to them.

The Committee

Big Thank You!

The AGM is coming up in October and there will be vacancies that we would like you to fill. There have been two roles on the committee that have been of a temporary (but important) nature, and these have now been merged into the roles of other committee members.

So, a Big Thank You to Norman Mitchell who, as IT administrator, introduced the committee to the benefit of Google Workspace – “a collection of cloud-based productivity, communication, and collaboration tools developed for organisations such as Hunstanton u3a”. Norman says “Many of the issues with email, contacts, document creation and sharing are solved with Workspace. Crucially, the 'onboarding' of new committee members is also eased and compliance with GDPR is made possible.” Norman has been able to answer any IT questions that have been raised, and his work has benefited all members.

And a Big Thank You to Verity Mitchell who introduced the role of Events co-ordinator and has successfully kept us all informed about what is going on in our area. Her regular mailings have enabled us to know about productions and events that we may otherwise not have heard about. A benefit to our wellbeing and enjoyment.

Hilary (Chair)

Your u3a Needs You!

I'm sure that you're all aware that, at the AGM in October, our Groups Coordinator, Jacquie, will be standing down. We are now looking for an enthusiastic volunteer to take on the role. There is no set job description, the role is what you make it. The main role is to:

- Support the Group Leaders by assisting with their queries

- Add new members to groups

- Set up new groups

- Close redundant groups

- Liaise with the Webmaster and/or their Assistant when changes are required to the website

Much of the above requires using our Beacon system which is very easy to use. Training would be provided.

In terms of time, Jacquie estimates that the role only involves on average 1-2 hours a week. She will remain responsible for the Members Handbook, annual groups audits, monthly groups listings, monthly slideshow and all other IT related tasks she currently undertakes. Jacquie would work with the new Coordinator until they are “bedded in”

Jacquie is quite happy to discuss the role with anyone who may be interested, so if you'd like to 'give something back' and help our u3a grow and prosper then do drop her an email on groups@hunstantonu3a.org, or contact any member of the committee with your questions.

Hilary (Chair)

Renewals and Welcomes

By now you should have received an invitation giving you details of how to renew your membership of Hunstanton u3a. Thank you to those who have already paid through bank transfer as it makes it so much easier for the Treasurer, and me as a newish Membership Secretary.

Please let me know if there are any changes to your details, or if you are **not** intending to renew your membership so that the records can be amended.

Have you ever wondered how new members get to hear about us? Well, when new members join we ask that question. The most frequent answers are word of mouth, or that they have heard from other members of Hunstanton u3a. That is a ringing endorsement from our members. We are all our best advertisement. Keep up the good work. The easiest way to join is by submitting the online form through the website. Do have a look at the website and see for yourself.

We aim to create a welcoming environment which enables new and prospective members to meet and get to know others. It can be daunting to attend one of our monthly meetings if you don't know anyone there. We aim to make this easier with our Welcome Team who are available to help with any questions, explain about the groups and make introductions.

You may have been met by one of the Team when you joined. In fact, joining the Team can be a good way of getting to know others and possibly becoming more involved in our u3a. We are a friendly and supportive group and are looking for more members to join the Team. Why not contact me or speak to any of the Welcome Team at the desk in the main room at the monthly meeting? We'd love to hear from you whether you are a recent member or have been one for a while.

Margaret [Membership Secretary]



Margaret (centre) with Welcome Team leaders Jill Davis (left) and Sue Hutcheson

June Hammond

I have been contacted by June's daughter Anthea, telling me that, sadly, June passed away on 1st September after being unwell for a few weeks. She has asked me to pass on details of the funeral and wake to those in the u3a who knew her.

Funeral service:

Wednesday September 23rd 2026 at 12 noon

Mintlyn Crematorium

Lynn Road,

Bawsey,

King's Lynn

Norfolk PE32 1HB

Followed by a warm welcome to share memories at:

Norfolk Lavender

Caley Mill,

Lynn Road,

Heacham,

Norfolk PE31 7JE

In lieu of flowers, donations if desired could be made to June's long-supported causes: Marie Curie, Tapping House, or the Norfolk Hospice (at the service or online by following the MemoryGiving link at www.ajcoggles.co.uk, which may take a couple of days to be active).

Margaret [Membership Secretary]

A Slight Editorial

My request for articles brought an overwhelming response, demonstrating not only that our members read my emails(!) but also that they love communicating with their fellow members. This issue of the Hunstanton u3a magazine is bigger than ever, and full of excellent writing and, especially, great memories. Please, *please*, let's keep it going.

In the days, when we would get around ten pages of copy, length of articles was an issue. Two to three pages could be too dominant. With twenty or more pages, it is no problem. If a piece is very long, then I will serialise it, as I have done with two items in this issue. So send me your work, no matter how long it is! With grateful thanks...

David

LAST FEW TICKETS REMAINING!
WHEN THEY'RE GONE THEY'RE GONE



The Art Appreciation Group
would like to invite all members of
Hunstanton u3a to join their trip to

**KEW
GARDENS**

WEDNESDAY 14TH OCTOBER

**u3a
Hunstanton**





The trip is planned very much around the exhibition on site of **Henry Moore sculptures** entitled *Monumental Nature*, illustrating just how art and nature can exist in perfect harmony. 30 sculptures are installed throughout the gardens, and 90 smaller scale works in an indoor exhibition, some of which are rarely accessible to the public.



There will also be botanical paintings in the gallery from the Shirley Sherwood collection.



All this is set within the beautiful gardens at Kew where the autumn leaves will be at their most colourful. The grass garden is filled with many hues and textures including the fabulous stalks of elephant grass. The first cyclamens will be blooming on the woodland floor together with Japanese anemones. The giant waterlilies in the Princess of Wales conservatory should still be in flower and of course there are many other glasshouses. Surely something for everyone!



THE PLAN
The plan is for a coach pick up at Hunstanton Bus Station at **8:00am** on the 14th October with a secondary pickup in **Dersingham** approximately 10–15 minutes later (exact details to be confirmed). We will then head for Kew Gardens with a quick comfort stop at **South Mimms** at approximately **11am**, arriving at Kew at **12 midday**.
For the return journey the coach will leave Kew at **4:00pm**, again a quick comfort stop on the way home if required, finally ending at Hunstanton Bus Station at **8:00pm**.



I also understand that there are a limited number of mobility scooters available to hire on arrival at Kew. Paths are all generally flat.



COSTS & PAYMENT



We have a limited number of coach tickets available at a price of **£35 each** (compared to the price by train of £40) and it is very much first come first served with priority being given to members of the Art Appreciation Group.



Payment, preferable by BACS, will be required by the **23rd September** and will be non-refundable unless we have a waiting list.



Group entry tickets to Kew are priced at **£23.30** for those under 65 and **£21.50** for over 65's. Proof of age will be required when entering Kew with a concession ticket.



Interested?

If you are interested in joining this trip then please contact
groups@hunstantonu3a.org

Art, nature and inspiration – a day to remember at Kew!

It will be a long day, but you can relax and sleep on the bus! Our last visit to Kew was in 2019 and it was a huge success. There is so much to see besides the Henry Moore sculptures and – let's face it – it's better than sitting at home and just pottering about. Treat yourself to a perfect day out in good company – you deserve it!

Jacque Yaxley and **Jill Davis** (aka **The Dream Team**) email groups@hunstantonu3a.org

From our Groups

Military Matters



The Military Matters group set out on Wednesday 2nd September 2026 for a day at the Norwich Aviation Museum. Six of us in two cars, timed to perfection, arrived within a minute of each other. Unfortunately, we had to split into two groups so only got a few photos of part of the group.

The visit consisted of going onto the Nimrod, which was used to patrol the seas around Britain detecting submarines by various means. With four of us and the guide, on this huge plane full of

equipment, it made one think how a crew of thirteen, and sometimes more, spent hours in the air. The photo of (from the left) Tim, David and Martin gives an idea of the size of the adapted comet airplane.

In the photo of David (right), he is standing alongside the English Electric Lightning fighter plane. It is the type of plane he flew, not the actual one. Along with the story of in air refuelling, this was a highlight of the day for me.

Moving along to the Hawker Hunter (below), another of the planes David had flown, he is discussing the plane with Tim.



The exhibits were very good and the memories they brought back of playing as a child, in the recycled Anderson shelter in my aunt's garden in Tottenham, were like yesterday as we looked at the one on show here.

The site is manned by volunteers, mostly ex-servicemen, and the machines and exhibits are maintained by them as well.

Having just read the book *Bloody Dangerous* by Colin Bell, and seeing a restored Rolls Royce Merlin engine on display, it raised the thought of: how did a wooden Mosquito wartime airplane manage

to get off the ground with not just one but two of these engines fitted?

Another very enjoyable visit with the Military Matters group.

Martin Turner

MOTO Sunday Lunch Group for Members On Their Own

This group has been running for many years and is currently led by John Stares, who organises lunch on the third Sunday, and myself, who does the first Sunday of the month.

John has taken us to many local hostelrys this year including Caley Hall, United Services Club, the Ship and the Chequers in Thornham, the Railway in Docking, Chives, Thaxters and the Feathers in Dersingham just to name a few.

I have taken over from Jane, who had been doing the first Sunday monthly, and I said that the venue would be the same monthly, starting with the Fox & Hounds in Heacham. There was a change of ownership, which made bookings uncertain, so I looked for a new venue which is easy to get to with car parking and a bus stop nearby.

The Queen Victoria was visited, and we have been enjoying their hospitality since May this year which has been well received by groups ranging from eight to fourteen members.

In October we will be returning to the Fox & Hounds, which is now under new management, and seven of us sampled the menu a few months ago.

The group is open to new members on their own so visit us at our webpage [MOTO webpage](#).

Ian Holland

Chair Yoga group 1



This photo is of Val, one of our Chair Yoga Group1 ladies who is one of our greatest movers, doing the Tree pose – but we think she'd make a first-class ballerina. Our group has been going now for eight years.

Still trying to get a group pose. Watch this space!

Kay Drewell

Table Tennis

Here are some active u3a members in the Table Tennis Group. It meets every Tuesday 2:00pm in Oasis. New members welcome. Don't have to be proficient. It is more about laughs than points!

Martin Peacock



Singing for Pleasure

For many years now, we've celebrated 'big' birthdays (those ending with a 0 or 5) with a surfeit of biscuits, a candle to blow out, and a birthday card. We've also tried to make the event a little more special by playing songs that were popular when the birthday boy/girl was born and when they celebrated their 21st birthday – nostalgia abounding.

We've now decided on a new way of marking these occasions: their own Desert Island Discs spot. We ask for five or six favourite tracks that are special to them and will play these in the break. A good idea, we think, to get to know our members' musical tastes.

It would be interesting to hear, in the next Magazine issue, from a few u3a members what their tracks would be and why.

Mariana

[Good idea, Mariana! So, u3a members, how about it? We love to see your choices and reasons – Ed.]

Tour of Some Churches and Colleges In Cambridge, Looking at the Arts and Crafts Movement

The Art Appreciation group recently enjoyed a fascinating guided tour exploring the Arts and Crafts movement in some of Cambridge's beautiful churches and colleges, but our day began with coffee at Fitzbillies restaurant along with their famous Chelsea buns, to where we also returned for lunch.



Our tour began at Little St Mary's Church, where we looked at examples of the Victorian Gothic revival and the influence of craftsmen such as Charles Eamer Kempe. We were reminded that the Arts and Crafts movement was not just about architecture, but about bringing together skilled craftsmen, artists and designers to create beautiful and useful work.

We then visited Queens' College, where we saw some particularly fine examples. The Old Hall was decorated in the 1870s to a design by the architect George Frederick Bodley, with the work carried out by the Cambridge artist-craftsman Frederick Leach. William Morris and Ford Madox Brown were also involved in the decoration of the hall. The intricate patterns and rich colours showed how much care was given to even the smallest details. We also walked across the Mathematical Bridge

with lovely views of the punts on the River Cam.

At St Botolph's Church, we saw more of Bodley's work, including his decorative treatment of the chancel. Frederick Leach also worked with Bodley on the church, including its roof and organ loft.

Our final visit was to Peterhouse, where we continued to see the influence of the Arts and Crafts tradition, including stained glass and carefully crafted details. The stained glass was particularly interesting, as we were able to look at the surviving cartoons used in its design. These full-scale preparatory drawings showed how carefully the compositions were planned before the glass was made. It was fascinating to see how closely the glassmakers followed them in execution.



The tour gave us a wonderful insight into the work of people such as Bodley, Morris, Leach, Madox Brown and Kempe, and showed us how closely architects, artists and craftsmen worked together.

The tour by Yvonne Pinchen, a green badge guide, was very enjoyable and informative, and it certainly made us look at Cambridge's historic buildings with a much more appreciative eye.

Hazel Denslow



One of the cartoons (preparatory drawings) and, opposite, the finished stained glass window

From our Members

Tales from the Riverbank – Part 1

Has anyone seen the film *Sliding Doors*? It is about how life can be totally changed by choosing a different path to tread from the norm.

This is how things turned out for myself and my partner Margaret Marciniak back in 2011.

I had taken early retirement from the Royal Mail (GPO) after basically a lifetime in the job from being a telegram boy at the age of 15 to a Postman Higher Grade when I retired. Most of my adult post office life was on the night shift so, suddenly at the ripe old age of 58, to be offered early retirement was a huge decision to make.

I'm pleased to say that with the help of my partner Margaret I made the right decision so, on the 11th January 2011, I had officially retired.

We both have a passion for tai chi, so it gave us the opportunity to run more classes full time which we did and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

We both enjoy fishing and, as any angler will tell you, their dream would be to have their own fishery. The opportunity came up for us later on in the year by way of a river cottage with approximately a quarter of a mile of the river Axe near Axminster in East Devon. It was a smallholding of around six and a quarter acres.

This was totally new territory for both of us; we had a small three bedroomed terraced house in Milton Keynes that we bought as our first house after being together for only about a year. It was now nearly five years hence and we both were looking for a new challenge together so, when we had the opportunity to have a totally different kind of lifestyle, we thought why not? Let's just go for it.

What I didn't mention was that this beautiful river cottage, dated 1875, was situated in a 'Severe Flood Plain', meaning that it was liable to potentially very bad flooding.

We did our homework and checked all the environmental records, and realised that the potential for a bad flood was a one in a hundred years. So, we decided to go for it, even though our conveyancing solicitor said: Allan, Maggi, please screw on your sensible heads – to which we said that we were willing to take a chance because there was something (a hidden energy) telling us to buy the cottage.

We just couldn't explain it, but we both felt the urgency to buy the cottage and the land even though we didn't have a clue about running a smallholding.

We moved in on a cold and wet November evening and quickly realised that we did not have any immediate neighbours other than those on the opposite side of the river bridge. This in itself felt quite strange after being used to living in a busy neighbourhood in Milton Keynes.

The following morning, we went for a walk down our stretch of river. Immediately there was a wonderful sense of peace and tranquillity. We had to pinch ourselves, is this really all ours? We had a four-acre field which bordered the river on one side and a single line railway track on the other. This in fact was a major flood plain and, when the river burst its banks, the field became a lake.



What struck us straight away was the abundance of wildlife along the riverbank. This was because it was totally private and there was hardly any human footfall along it.

We had to learn a lot of new skills over the next eight years that we were there, including how to re-roof a stable block which proved to be great fun.

We had an old outbuilding, which had been used for car repairs at some time, so it was not in the best of repair. I had always wanted a tai chi studio so, together with Maggi's son-in-law who was a builder and lived in Plymouth, we set out to convert the outbuilding. Again, I was learning new skills, particularly how to insulate the inside of the outbuilding and how to mix sand and cement correctly for screeding the floor. By June of the following year, it was completed and we were so proud of our own tai chi studio which looked out onto our four-acre field; absolute bliss.

The Cottage in the River

Unfortunately, the one-hundred-year event was to arrive much sooner than we anticipated. Cast your minds back to 2012; in March we had a mini heatwave, so we thought that this was going to be the start of a fantastic summer; how wrong we were. It started to rain in April and didn't stop until well into the following year of 2013. Apparently, it was to do with the Gulf Stream which kept on circulating around the West country and continuously dumping rain on the area.

We didn't really think much of the constant rain for a while. We started to get used to the river breaking its banks and into our river garden – after all it was a spate river and had sea trout and salmon in it. When the river was up, it gave the migratory fish an opportunity to move upstream and get past the weir which was just the over side of our river bridge.

To watch these wonderful creatures jumping the weir was a sight to behold, and the environment agency water bailiffs policed the area vigorously. After all, the river was classified as a SSSI (site of special scientific interest). The completion of our tai chi studio coincided with work being completed in our cottage. We had brand new central heating and the bathroom completely revamped. Everything seemed wonderful until July 17th; that day is etched on my mind. Leading up to the 17th July, we had nothing but constant heavy rain and we started to receive flood warnings from the environment agency.

Early on the 17th July, we received all three flood alerts, flood alert, flood warning and then severe flood warning. By the time we got the severe flood warning the river was nearly twelve foot up and we had about five feet of water pressing on our windows.



It felt a bit like living in a goldfish bowl. But, because it was an old river cottage, the water only slowly seeped in from around the skirting boards so, for the next twelve hours, we bailed the water out and kept it below the skirting boards which minimised any damage. Fortunately, we had stone floors.

It was a bit surreal to look out of our lounge window and watch the fire brigade's rescue dinghy go sailing past and down the flooded main road. We gave them the thumbs up, so they left us to carry on bailing out. They had more important things to do, like rescuing stranded motorists who had tried to drive through three feet of flood water outside our front door.

The following day, it was sunny and warm and just like a normal summer's day. The only difference was that, when we went outside to survey the damage, the flood water had caused it to look like someone had dropped a bomb on our land.

All the fences surrounding the field were flattened; our river garden looked rather bleak because the floodwater had washed away all of our large plant pots and garden furniture which by now were in the estuary in Axmouth and on their way out into the English Channel.

Worse was yet to come. When we went down to our newly finished tai chi studio and peered in through the window, all seemed well until we went inside. The floodwater had managed to get inside and completely soak the newly fitted carpet; it made our heats sink. We had recently planted a lot of shrubs and border plants as well; they also had disappeared.

We had recently started to keep chickens and Aylesbury ducks, and fortunately managed to secure them in our hay barn the previous day. They managed to climb on to the bales of hay to escape the flood water. For the next couple of months, we kept on finding eggs dotted around the barn.

We never claimed off our insurance even though we lost quite a bit from our garden, our new bathroom was worse for wear and the new carpet in the tai chi studio needed a really good deep clean.

Reality started to sink in: this is how it may be in the future for us so we will have to live accordingly.

It took us a while to clean everything up and get a sense of normality back in our lives, but we had learned a valuable lesson about living in a severe flood plain: preparation was everything, so we invested in flood boards for the house and the studio.

I had actually videoed the severe flood while we were bailing out to get more of an understanding of the nature of the flooding. This proved to be very valuable because we realised that the flooding started from our main road then, when the river broke its banks, it would come in from the river garden area. It also came in from a culvert on the edge of our land so in effect we had a three-pronged attack from the flooding.

We worked out the best way to minimise the damage of any future flooding and, by and large, it worked for us.

Allan Howlings

To be continued next month...

A Lovely Way to Start a Holiday (Kenya, 1956)

The bus trundled along the dusty road, heading for the river-crossing to Mombasa. The Kenyan darkness comes quickly and, as I leaned on the ferry's rail, I watched the sun's last rays glinting on the river. My friends were all back in Aden, in married quarters or waiting their turn for leave to the UK, but I had chosen to spend my leave in Kenya. Though I was alone, it didn't worry me. I always enjoyed my own company.

I was grateful for this break from the relentless heat and humidity of Aden (now in the Yemen), where there were no trees or vegetation. Everything there was dry and dusty: even the sea was warm. Here there were wonderful bushes, flowers and trees, such a refreshing contrast. When I had arrived at the leave centre and unpacked, all I wanted was a cool beer, so – at the time – it seemed a good idea to catch a bus and visit Mombasa.

The ferry-boat drew alongside the jetty and the local Kenyans stood back to let *me* off first. How strange. Then I remembered how, that morning, I had left the old Dakota plane at the airport and entered the customs building through the 'Whites only' entrance. Since there was no such discrimination in Aden, it had made me feel slightly uncomfortable.

I wandered into the old town, drinking in the sights and sounds of Africa. My natural homing instincts drew me to a bar in a small hotel, where a few colonials drinking gins and tonic looked rather disdainfully at me. Oh s–t, this place wasn't for me. There must be somewhere with a bit of life – though I didn't think these gin and tonic guys would know where to advise me to go for some proper night life. I had one small beer and left, thinking that somewhere nearer to the docks might suit me and my thirst.

Before long, I caught sight of a garish neon sign which said *Bar and Beer* – *this* looked more like it, except, as I approached, the sound of raised voices got louder. Outside the bar, a full-scale riot seemed to be taking place. A crowd of Kenyans had gathered on the pavement and I could make out two men thrashing each other with terrifyingly large wooden knobkerries. The crowd was shouting and encouraging the combatants, who were covered in blood and not giving way. I *had* to get a closer view. This really looked like fun. When the spectators saw me, they 'respectfully' gave way, which made me regret being so nosey. Now I was far too close to the action. One of the flailing sticks accidentally cracked me over the skull.

S–t! I could feel blood running down my face. I staggered in a daze towards the Bar. It was at the top of a flight of bare wooden stairs, but I thought I might be badly hurt as I seemed to be drenched in blood. It was pouring down my face staining my white shirt and slacks.

Dazed, I entered the brightly lit bar, where a sudden silence told me what a sight I looked. I noticed a group of men whose accents told me they were Irish, probably seamen on shore for night of heavy drinking.

'Jesus!' one of them exclaimed. 'What in heaven's name have you done?'

'I was just hit by a guy outside,' said I, pointing towards the stairs. 'It was...'

'*What!*' he shouted. 'Come on, lads. Let's get at 'em.'

As one, they jumped to their feet and crashed out of the room.

'B-but it was my fault for...' I stammered. Too late. My avenging Irishmen couldn't be stopped.

One of the 'ladies' in the bar helped me get a bit cleaned up. I thanked her profusely, but declined the services she tried to offer. Skinny, aged about 90, and no teeth. Not my type (could anybody be that desperate?). I was glad to get my beer – at last. Boy, it tasted good.

Above the sound of the juke box I could hear police sirens and a lot of shouting and whistle blowing. It was then I realised that my valiant Irishmen had not come back for their drinks; while I downed another beer, I wondered what had happened to them. But my head was splitting. Maybe I'd better head back to the Nyalie leave centre and get properly cleaned up.

Outside there was nobody to be seen. Had my battling helpers been arrested? I felt rather guilty but, since there didn't seem to be much I could do about it, I made my way back to the ferry. I planned to get back to the mainland and then walk back to the leave centre. It was a wonderful moonlit night and I maybe the cool night air would calm my throbbing head.

I had only walked about half a mile when a Land Rover pulled up and a man asked what I was doing. I said I was in the RAF and staying at Nyali. And, as they could probably see, I had had an accident. The young man's companion seemed horrified and asked if she could help me, but I said I would be OK.

'No, no,' she cried. 'We can't let you walk there at night.'

'It's all right,' said I. 'It's not too far and I do a lot of walking.'

'But there are things out there that might think you're their supper!'

I hadn't thought of that. 'In that case, I'd be very grateful for a lift.'

What a fool. The large bump on my head had made me forget the dangers. Lions, hippos, snakes... What a night!

Thanks to my rescuers, I made it safely to my room in a hut at the leave centre. But the night had not finished with me yet – the room had been ransacked and my spare cash had gone. I had left it behind for safety, in case I lost it while out for the evening.

I don't know what happened to the valiant Irishmen.

It was a lovely start to a few days' leave.

A true story, written by my late husband, Chris.

Mary Mackie

Bike, Walk or Drive Event



This photo is of myself [centre] with Cheryl Lovett [left] and Dawn Davies, all u3a Members, on duty Saturday 12th September at Union Church Hunstanton for the Norfolk Churches Trust Bike, Walk or Drive event. Earlier in the morning Cheryl and Heather (u3a) saw Heather's sister Marilyn, from Liverpool, off on her bike. She accomplished 57 miles.

I occupied myself making the welcome banner from odds and ends I could find, and Cheryl transformed the church book case. We had a much enjoyed conversation, or two or three, over a cuppa when Heather and Daphne, also u3a, joined us. All in all, a very successful and enjoyable Sunny Hunny day.

Kay Drewell

Chris Taylor's 90th Birthday

A lovely birthday celebration with u3a friends and family for Chris Taylor's 90th birthday. They raised over £1,000 (in lieu of presents) for the Norfolk Wildlife Trust.

Jill Davis



A Tale of Two Worlds



Once upon a time, in a coastal cottage near Hunstanton, a gentle soul named Lady Brenda lived in a realm governed by strict, costly rules. Her home was tethered to a single, wall-bound landline telephone supplied by the great monopoly **BT**, who charged princely sums for mere minutes of talk. High above her roof stood a metal **aerial**, capturing just a handful of television channels. Brenda's life was chained to rigid broadcast schedules set by the **BBC** and its few peers; if she missed an evening show, the magic was lost forever. Meanwhile, her cherished family photos gathered dust in physical albums or sat trapped on clunky local computer disks, vulnerable to crashing and locked to a single room.

Then, a quiet revolution swept through the kingdom. A wave of **fast, cheap broadband** and accessible smartphones arrived, shattering the old ways. Modern computing became everywhere at once. The era of slow, expensive, local-only technology vanished, replaced by an extraordinary **global cloud**. Brenda no longer worried about running out of hard drive space or losing precious memories; her snapshots were blessed with **automatic photo uploads**, flying instantly to secure cloud storage and sharing themselves with family across the world in seconds. Writing letters and creating documents moved seamlessly online, allowing her to collaborate with her local u3a friends in real time.

The old monopolies faded, making way for a **myriad of new suppliers**. Brenda said goodbye to restrictive viewing times and embraced **on-demand media**, choosing exactly what to watch and when to watch it. The entire world had become faster, cheaper, and endlessly connected.

Yet, a few stubborn villagers down the road refused to cross the digital bridge. They clung tightly to their costly old landlines and outdated local setups, believing they were saving themselves trouble. In truth, by shunning the modern cloud, they were missing out on the wonders of global connection while paying a heavy penalty – spending far more of their precious time and money for a fraction of the convenience.

Lady Brenda gently guided her friends into the digital sunlight, showing them that modern technology was not a dark art, but an affordable, liberating tool. They happily traded their expensive old habits for the boundless freedom of the cloud, and they all lived happily ever after.

Norman Mitchell

Flash Fiction 2

The Sea Dragon

My house has flooded for the first time. Knee deep in brown, cold, stinking water. Upstairs there's a stove and some rescued camping paraphernalia. In the cold stench, the house is not my friend.

Leaving by boat at night, I find the car on dry land. Remembering my holidays I abandon the area. I drive through the rain to the seaside.

There are no floods here, just memories. In the ice blue sky sharpened by an arctic wind, the sun is up. Walking along the prom, alone, I hear a slow mechanical sound from the abandoned entertainments; without human aid, the Sea Dragon makes his slow circuit on his track, glinting in the sun, pulling empty carriages with sighs of satisfaction.

Septimus Solo

(Septimus Solo is the assumed name of a Hunstanton u3a member)

Eternal Youth

Who is that grey haired old lady staring back at me from the mirror?

It looks like a version of my mother: surely it can't be me?

Old age creeps up on us surreptitiously and quietly descends like a cloak enveloping that young being who is still there, desperate to be seen and heard.

Youth is definitely wasted on the young. There's no appreciation of pain-free joints, of clear wrinkle free skin, of the ability to dance the night away and still get up for work the following morning.

Yet I think I may have stumbled upon the secret of eternal youth, no creams, potions or expensive face-lifts required.

A few months ago I chanced upon the email address of someone I had known back in the sixties. We had dated for a while in our teens but had drifted apart when life took us in different directions. I had often wondered how he was, how he'd fared and here was an opportunity to find out. After mulling it over for a couple of days I decided to send him an email.

I wrote tentatively; after all, he may not even remember me sixty years down the line! The reply came back quickly:

"I remember you as a lovely intelligent girl with long blonde hair and a bubbly personality."

I read this line over and over again. In someone's mind I was sixteen. Not that grey haired old lady who looked back from the mirror but a young girl with long blonde hair, the real me!

We emailed each other telling of our lives and our families. It was good to reconnect after all these years. We even exchanged photos of our younger days, reliving shared memories.

Luckily, we now live hundreds of miles apart and I don't want to meet up. I prefer to remain sixteen, life was easy and fun, we thought it would be that way for ever. Eternal youth.

I've been so lucky, I've had a great life with good friends and a loving family but if I could start again... youth would not be wasted on me next time around.

Jan Fisher



My Life in Local Government

A very brief summary: Part 1

When Squire LeMoir asked me to write a short piece about my life in Local Government, I readily agreed. As a young teenager, if somebody had asked me what I would like to do when I left school there is no way I would have said "to work in a Town Hall". People in general have very little idea of what actually goes on in Town Halls.

My dad had been working for Islington Council for many years in the Housing Department and, when I was close to leaving school and still had no idea of what sort of work I wanted to do, he suggested I might look into Council work as a possibility. I discovered that I could apply for a trainee position with the Council which would allow me to try working in different departments before choosing one in which to develop a career.

So, at the beginning of September 1966, I started work initially in the Public Health Department on the Reception/Public Information Desk. My day-to-day duties included dealing with complaints about smelly drains, noise nuisances and wasp and vermin infestations. On my first day I was presented with a smelly jute sack containing a large, stinking dead rat! Was this really the career for me? Speaking to HR a transfer was organised to the Town Clerk's Department – committee administration section.

This turned out to be right up my street. Not only did the work really suit me but I also met a young lady working in the Public Relations Department. It all began with me showing her how to use the photocopier (it was quite complicated back in the day). Three years later she became my wife. As a young trainee I began day release at Tottenham Technical College where four years later I gained the Diploma in Municipal Administration which, with the considerable experience and promotions subsequently gained, allowed me to be admitted as a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries.

Around the time that Annette and I were getting married, I opted to widen my experience by joining another London Borough (of Barnet). Which had the added bonus of a service tenancy. Long one short, Barnet was a very different place to work – highly and unnecessarily/obstructively bureaucratic. Fortunately, in very short order a vacancy arose back at Islington for a Senior Committee Clerk working with new legislation geared towards the setting up of a Social Services Committee. Promotions followed, Section Head, Deputy Borough Secretary and then Head of Administration.

These promotions were accompanied by much greater responsibilities including overall control of 200 staff engaged in a wide range of functions including: cleaning of over 200 buildings; Council-wide switchboard and printing and stationery; central mail service for 300 locations; secretarial and admin support to all 52 Councillors; departmental health and safety; oversight of the registration of births, deaths and marriages; and facilities management for both Town Halls. During this time I worked closely with many Councillors who went on to be well known politicians nationally e.g. Dame Margaret Hodge, Jack Straw, Michael Morris and Chris Smith (all Parliamentary Cabinet members).

Some of the bigger challenges that I faced were:-

Poll Tax Riots – Political activists (numbering in their thousands) from all parts of the country descended on Islington Town Hall seeking to prevent Councillors accessing full Council meetings where the poll tax levels were required to be set. This involved substantial liaison with the local police, including mounted police.

Salman Rushdie (an Islington resident) – Following the publication of his book *The Satanic Verses*, a group of local people hired the Public Hall to campaign in support of Salman who had become the subject of a fatwa condemning him to death by the Ayatollah Khomeini, the then Supreme Leader of Iran. Again this involved significant policing and security issues.

Civil Emergencies –

1. Burst major water main. Following the fracturing at 5.00pm of a major water supply pipe under Holloway Road N7 close to an electricity sub-station, the police reported that many houses in the area were already being flooded; a rest centre needed to be identified and set up. Because of its location I identified the Sobell Sport Centre for at-risk residents. I authorised the use of the Sport Centre catering facilities and 'imported' from social services department a stock of sleeping necessities: fold up beds, blankets etc. (Many residents appeared to be more concerned about the welfare of their pets including dogs, cats and reptiles.)

2. Residents reported to the police, in the early hours of a Monday morning, explosions in the Finsbury Town Hall/Sadlers Wells Theatre area. This was at the time of the troubles in Ireland and the police suspected this could be a bomb. Some residents found large pieces of hot metal in their gardens. This resulted in my setting up a rest centre in Islington Town Hall for those residents who needed, or wished, to be evacuated. Volunteers were contacted who came in and supported the evacuees and provided teas, coffees and sandwiches and such items as baby formula, nappies etc. purchased from a local shop. (I drew the line at requests for alcohol and tobacco!!) On close investigation by the police and the military, the incident turned out to be exploded oxyacetylene containers which were being used for a refurbishment on a roof which the contractor had omitted to make safe before leaving the site.

Peter Francis

Concludes next month

Read all about Peter's trip to Ghana, and about Princess Anne's sausage roll!



Annual Event 11.11.69

*Neath his breath lies a curse
His labours have all been in vain
As the path was once more carpeted
With Autumn leaves again*

*The wisened worker, cap skew
Begins the golden leaves to pile
Whilst around the corner the mischevious wind
Watches with an impish smile*

*The worker stretches for his spade
That's on his council cart
A signal for the cheeky wind
His annual game to start.*

*Darting from behind the wall
The leaves, the wind espies
and while the sweeper's back is turned
It whisks them far and high.*

*The sweeper throws down his broom
And lets forth a violent oath
For he toiled all day to no avail
To keep a leaf-free path.*

*The wind's reply is soft and low
As it whistles on its way
"I'll leave you now to carry on
But I'll be back another year"*



Going to Prison

August bank holiday having been seen off, and a chance to recharge our batteries after the hottest summer most of us can remember, we booked ourselves in at HMP Dartmoor.

Memories of *Porridge*, and the *Hound of the Baskervilles*, combined to give us an appetite for the history of the place. We were not disappointed as we carefully navigated the bleak moorland past herds of wild horses and Highland cattle, individual sheep asleep on the road and the occasional vehicle.

The clouds had settled on the gorse, and the rain pattered the windscreen as Princetown hove into view – a community founded in the long history of Dartmoor Prison, but now with an uncertain future.

The prison appeared suddenly within a street. Pretending to look like a building site with temporary fencing and 'Keep Out' notices, we entered its forecourt to turn around in search of the Prison Museum. Being in front of the main gate, we clearly could not park in the three spaces reserved for 'Governor' 'Doctor' 'Visitor'.



Dartmoor Prison. Source: Wikipedia

But this was the welcome years back for 250 French prisoners of war marched from the coast in 1809, and later for Americans in 1813. Eventually Dartmoor housed 7000 military prisoners. Approximately 1500 died from smallpox and typhoid, and others murdered, killed while trying to escape or having died from exposure or malnutrition. Punishments included time in 'the Hole' and starvation diets. These men are buried on the moor, now with memorials.

In 1850 the prison re-opened after 34 years to take convicts originally sentenced to transportation. It almost seemed benign with its prison farm of 1600 acres with pigs, sheep and cattle. Its single occupancy cells behind an iron open grid door provided privacy for men to make a wide variety of handmade articles including model ships, churches and, more recently space vehicles made with folded paper. There was also a mutiny in 1932 which destroyed the majority of records prior to that date.

Manning the desk at the museum entrance was a large former prison officer who had served 34 years working at the prison. The atmosphere throughout the museum was one of a cold, dank, utilitarian building, celebrating its dark granite walls as a fit punishment for inmates incarcerated for years. The photographs of the officers on horseback that patrolled the moor were particularly grim.

Dartmoor prison is temporarily closed due to the presence of radon gas which restricts visits to areas of the prison. We found it fascinating, and the following quote from the Governor aptly sums up its relevance today:

"...HMP Dartmoor is part of one of the world's most successful and respected prison systems. I think it will surprise you and I hope you will take the opportunity to find out more about this hidden but uniquely interesting world, and to think hard about the serious issues of crime, punishment and rehabilitation."

Steve Mead - Governor, HMP Dartmoor

Martin Chown

I Wish...

I wish I was a gardener. I love waiting for rose buds to magically change from boring little green lumps to rounded, fatter buds, and finally opening into wonderful flowers. It always amazes me that I have green buds that always, through the night, open up into glorious arrangements of petals and scents. To see it actually happening, perhaps I should take a torch and watch, overnight. Aaah! That's the problem. Spring is too cold for overnight vigils.

I wish I could cook. I've always said anyone can cook if they can read. I did manage nutritious meals when my children were young. My husband was long-suffering and kind... and he always made the gravy. I could also manage fish and chips.

I am also a total gadget freak. Anything newly advertised and I was first in line. The deep fat fryer was first – wonderful crisp batter and evenly cooked chips. My acquisition of a microwave that cooked frozen peas perfectly was up there with the birth of my children!

I baked for school fêtes, covering any mistakes with thick layers of icing. Great was my joy when the Parent/Teachers Association decided to hold phantom cake sales. Money that would have been spent on ingredients was donated to the school fund.

I did manage a sort of chicken casserole when it was our turn to host the neighbourhood friendships group. Jars of sweet and sour sauce provided a variation.

Now living in the UK, my house is named Edelweiss by the previous owners and The Dolls House by me. When John and I moved into Edelweiss, his career made it impossible for him to help with unpacking. I just dumped everything for the kitchen into the drawers provided. Recently I bought drawer dividers and deep is my joy at everything neatly sitting in categories in their own spaces. A huge step in my desire to be efficient and organised. Of course, I still have to open every drawer to find the tea strainer I know I have.

I wish I liked dusting. It just gives me hay fever! I'm afraid, growing up in South Africa, we always had two housemaids and I never realised that dust appears magically on a daily basis, and now it is my job to remove it. Where does dust come from? Who makes dust and how can we stop them?

I wish I was a proper housewife. I am always grateful for visitors and the need to put things away and... dust! Unexpected visitors cause panic and huge apologies for clutter and dust and piles of magazines.

BUT... I am a great patchwork quilter. Yah! Everyone needs something to be good at.

Emigrating to New Zealand in 2010, I found it difficult to find a friendship group.

John walked straight into an aircraft museum in our town. He loved metalwork. The museum was run by a group of men with no industrial or aircraft experience. It was like an answer to their prayers. John made jigs. No idea what one of them is, but everyone in the museum was very excited about it.

The nurse at our surgery was from Yorkshire and she asked me what my hobbies were, and did I sew? I said I did sew but I meant that I sewed on buttons that came off shirts and sometimes shortened hems! She invited me to join a patchwork quilting club, and gave me times and directions to the club house. I thanked her enthusiastically but thought "not in a million years". She phoned me the night before, saying she would pick me up for the meeting to save me facing thirty unknown women alone. She introduced me to some of the ladies and went off to a committee meeting.

The ladies of the Friday Morning Quilting Group were just lovely. Very friendly, showing me what they were working on and the patterns they were following. I was totally captivated and couldn't wait to start my first quilt.

The last six years have been very lacking in quilting experience for me. After John died I pulled out a quilt and started hand-sewing for my godson's wedding present. There have been long periods of no sewing for me in the last six years, but another two days of machine sewing will see it finished. In time for the birth of my godson's third child!

I have enough fabric and ideas for a quilt to see me out of this life. And, as I am useless at gardening, cooking and dusting, I will ditch them and put my time into quilts.

Everyone needs at least one talent. Thanks to the ladies of the Tauranga Patchwork and Quilting Club, I found mine. And that's my dinner burnt! Thank goodness for baked beans and gluten-free bread.

Elizabeth Von Holstein-Rathlou

If he did have short fat hairy legs, I never saw them!

When I was about thirteen years old, my parents moved from one side of Peterborough to the other, to a rather well-to-do area near Longthorpe. This coincided with me wanting to earn a few bob each week, and the obvious choice was a newspaper round. Thinking back, lots of my friends at the time also had similar part-time jobs, either before or after school. Nowadays, of course, many people don't bother with getting a newspaper delivered, so the opportunities for teenage employment have diminished somewhat.

Anyway, I soon gained a job, delivering to the houses in the immediate area to where I lived. Imagine my delight when I bumped into a well-known TV personality, during the era when he was at the height of his fame. Ernie Wise lived on my paper round (it was his legs I referred to earlier, as described by his TV partner Eric Morecambe).

I regularly chatted to him, as he had a little Scottie dog, and I often saw him out and about walking. He always had time to ask me how I was,



and often came to the door to take the newspaper from me (I recall it was *The Times*). In fact, he said "Call me Ernie". But I can say without doubt that I never ever saw Eric Morecambe visit Ernie and his wife Doreen in Peterborough. I think they kept their social and public lives very separate.

Next door to Ernie lived another entertainment celebrity, the singer Edmund Hockridge. He had starred in many West End musicals, and was a regular on TV in the 1960s and early 70s. He and his wife Jackie were also on my newspaper round. Again, they were very chatty and welcoming.

Many of my colleague newspaper boys often said they wouldn't have liked to have my newspaper round, because there were so many big houses and big driveways, meaning it took longer cycling or walking up and down from the roadside. But they soon realised there was a huge advantage to delivering to such large houses.

Large houses meant wealthy families, and wealthy families meant big tips at Xmas time! I had a technique, honed over the years, where in the first week of December, I would bang the garden gate quite firmly to make sure the family knew their delivery was imminent, and thus to get their cash ready. If that didn't work, in week two, I would whistle walking up the driveway, to announce my presence. And if that failed, week three meant I'd actually ring the door bell, give them a Christmas card and wish the pyjama-clad householder a Merry Christmas, and just wait; they soon got the message. I don't think there was a single household which didn't contribute to my Xmas box! And, I can tell you, Ernie and Edmund (or Ted, as he asked me to call him) were both more than willing to help build my funds!

Ian Gray



Memories

Sad news this month that Richard O'Sullivan the actor had died aged 82 on September 4th.



He was the star of a very funny and ground-breaking TV series, called *Man About the House*, which daringly showed a man living in a flat share with two girls. This was unheard of at the time and was thought of as a bit racy.

I was working for a Public Relations Company, McLeish Associates, and one of our clients booked him to open their stand at the Ideal Home Exhibition at Olympia.

One of the jobs I was given was to look after him and then take him across to the Capitol Radio Studio at Olympia and to then bring him back to our stand. So I spent about an hour chatting with him on my own. He was very approachable and quite charming, and he was a pleasure to look at. I was in my early 20's at the time, and quite presentable back then, so we chatted and flirted just a little bit. It was a great fun job.

I now know that he was only three years older than me, and I was a bit star struck. I think I may have missed a trick there!

He was quite ill in his later years and spent them in the Actors and Performers Care Home which is why we didn't see him on TV anymore.

So goodbye Richard O'Sullivan, it was a pleasure to have met you.

Ann McKimm

The Beginning

The landscape of our windy corner of Norfolk is such an incredibly complex mix of different features. Across just a few miles we go from mud flats to dunes to chalk downland to vast heaps of glacial debris and the formerly coastal cliffs at Wolferton that are now a mile or two inland.

In contrast across much of Australia or Canada, for example, one can fly for hundreds of miles and see just the same terrain: endless repetition of the same few traits. And most of the variety among which we are fortunate to live is the product of a series of Ice Ages, five in the last 500,000 years, and later the wind and sea's everyday remoulding of the detritus and rubble the white ploughs left behind.

Imagine standing on the hill up from Hunstanton to Ringstead in 16000 BC at the height of the last Ice Age. Look north and see a wall of ice, a great frozen dome stretching away over Scandinavia across the North Pole to Chicago that reached perhaps a mile high. Look to the west and you will see a lobe of ice probing into the Fenlands like a gigantic JCB excavating a monstrous lake in the landscape and piling up rubble around its fringes. Look to the east and you will see a grimy mass of rubble-laden ice grind ashore towards Cromer.

Wrap up well! As the atmosphere is chilled over the ice, it becomes denser, sinks and, through gravity, a current speeds towards the edge of the cap, falls off and crashes towards you. Dig a shelter to escape the blast of frigid winds roaring down from the icy heights at up to 200mph, hide from the blast of grit and dust that can strip the skin from your face and prepare to explore when it eases!

At the height of the Ice Age, along the fringes of the ice sheet we would have seen from our hilltop refuge a hyper-cold and barren polar desert where now doughnuts and ice cream are summer delights. The nearest modern equivalent might be the dry valleys of Antarctica (ice-free but as devoid of life as Mars) or at best the lichen-coated wastes of Baffin Island.

During 'warmer' interludes our local area might have been characterized by patches of tundra: a barren landscape covered by a sparse herbage of low-growing plants such as lichens, mosses, and hardy grasses. Roughly an analogue of South Georgia. Further south and east was the continuous expanse of dry, cold steppe-tundra that reached from the Atlantic across Eurasia and North America; the home not just of the mammoth but of horses, reindeer, bison, rhino, lions and small numbers of human hunters who may well have followed the herds north into Norfolk in warmer intervals. Imagine flying over that landscape; the herds migrating with the seasons might have looked rather like a chilly Serengeti.

How do we know what that environment was like? The bones of large mammals tell us which species inhabited the landscape and that gives us a general idea of the vegetation that might have grown. Plant remains, especially pollen, and the remains of insects are very informative since many species have such very niche habitats that they can fill out the details of climate and landscape.

Then, suddenly in geological terms, the ice retreated, sea-levels rose, and after a series of abrupt climatic fluctuations the white stuff disappeared by 11,300 years ago, leaving the immense piles of debris that now cover much of eastern England. For example, the Cromer Ridge is a 300-foot pile of rubble marking the furthest expanse of the ice sheet; the valley on Ringstead Downs is an outflow channel for meltwater; the shingle, sand and mud that makes our coast is the ground-up residue of distant mountains; lumps of Northumberland coal have been deposited on our coast by the ice, as has Norwegian quartz; the Hunstanton Park esker is a winding mile-long ridge of sand and gravel that once filled up a channel of meltwater under the ice sheet.

When the ice melted away, life lost no time in taking advantage of new opportunities. In the first millennia after the ice we would have looked out from Ringstead over a steppe landscape of rivers, ponds and lakes stretching as far as the eye can see.

On drier ground, mosses and grasses establish themselves after lichens. They die, rot down, blend with the rock debris, and often surprisingly quickly create the first soil. Then come shrubs and they are succeeded by pioneer woodland species including rowan, aspen and birch followed by the spread of Scots pine – and lastly we have mature woodlands, the "climax" vegetation we are familiar with in lowland England today. Our area would have been rather unusual however; then, even more than today, west Norfolk was a watery place, an area with far more marsh and pond than we know in the modern era. These were, however, a rich source of year-round food to our hunter-gatherer ancestors – twelve months in the year there was an abundant supply of seafood, wild fowl, grazing animals, and also wood, willow, reeds and peat for fuel and shelter that let them give up the nomad life and settle down in villages made from materials they gathered on the land about them. We can imagine a Mesolithic lifestyle not unlike that lived in the Fens until almost modern times. Ten thousand years, say four hundred generations, and the way Norfolk folk made a living stayed much the same!

Then little-by-little the seas rose and drowned the newly greened lands. By about 4000 BC the coast was pretty much where it is now, save for local advances and retreats evidenced by, for example, the ancient peat that can be seen exposed on Holme beach at low tide – mixed with unexploded artillery shells and a few flint arrowheads.

We often think of pre-agricultural societies as nomadic, wandering from campsite to campsite in search of herds to hunt and fruits to gather, but this was not necessarily so, especially when salt- or freshwater yield year-round supplies. In such sites in Yorkshire, Northumberland and Northern Ireland in recent years archaeologists have



found traces of permanent settlements that seem to have looked rather like the tepees of recent centuries in North America and Arctic Eurasia.

This was the period from 9600 BC to 4000 BC known to prehistorians as the Mesolithic, the Middle Stone Age. It is curious to note some of the animals we would have seen in dryer parts of West Norfolk in the Mesolithic: the aurochs, wild horses, the lynx, elk, brown bears and wolves. When we think of re-wilding and untamed Nature, few can imagine Ken Hill roamed by a range of fierce beasts with sharp, crushing teeth!

However, some take a different view. One may see the narrative of expulsion from the Garden of Eden as a nostalgic memory of an idyll, a time before agriculture brought never-ending work and fear of famine. In modern times, archaeologists have noted that the pre-modern farmer's life meant a host of diseases and parasites from domestic animals, stunted bodies, and idle elites who lorded it over puny peasant masses. Only in the last couple of generations have we grown to the height and strength of our Mesolithic ancestors.

The End

There have been five ice ages in the last 500,000 years. Will there be another? Yes. When? Global warming may postpone a return of the white whammy but it will be back. It won't be back for at least the next 50,000 years, but someday it will grind over mountains, seas and Norfolk and future ages may rediscover the reality of Mesolithic life.

By the way, in conclusion, the Paleolithic is the Old Stone Age, the time of ice ages, the Mesolithic is the Middle Stone Age, the period after the ice but before farming, the Neolithic is the time between the first farmers and the introduction of the first metallic tools and weapons.

Reference:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_history_of_viruses

<https://norfolkcoast.org/app/uploads/2024/06/geological-landscapes-of-the-norfolk-coast.pdf>

John McLennan

The Story of Henri(etta)

Clare is a friend of mine and told me this true story. It is so touching that I wanted to tell my fellow u3a members about it.

The nestbox of bluetits in Clare's garden successfully fledged on May 25th this year. The next day, she popped across to her neighbour's house for cat-feeding duty.

While the cat enjoyed sunning himself after his supper, there was a commotion amongst the ducks in the ditch at the end of the garden. Clare heard an awful scream from the stream. Looking down, she saw two drakes trying to drown a baby bluetit! She scared them off, whipped her sandals off and climbed down to rescue the fledgling.



Clare took him, muddy and scared, to her mother's garden (also a neighbour) to rinse off the mud and keep him safe. She didn't know whether the bird was a he or a she, so she dubbed him/her "Henri". If female, that would be short for Henrietta.

Henri sat in Clare's hands, eyes closed and shivering for two hours. Although she knew that birds should be placed in a box to recover, he was still wet and she hoped that the warmth of her hands helped him.

After two hours, he was well enough to sit on her thumb. Clare took him back to her garden in case his parents were around. No sign. She played him some bluetit calls that she had found online. He listened with interest but did not reply.

It was nearly dusk, so she settled him in her willow tree where he seemed safe and camouflaged. There was a thunderstorm overnight and she thought of him out there, alone, experiencing one for the first time.

First thing next morning, Clare was delighted to see him looking bright and perky, with his feathers clean and fluffy. He was exactly where she had left him (which, of course, is their strategy as fledglings stay where they are told until collected by their parents).

As Clare works from home, during her lunchbreak she nipped to the RSPB shop at Titchwell, in case they had live mealworms. They only had dried, but suggested how to soak them.

Clare said that the look of bemusement on Henri's face said it all, although it was interesting to note that he'd moved a short distance. At least he could fly.

During the afternoon, she could hear bluetit calls from her home office. When she checked later, Henri had gone. Hopefully he'd been collected by his parents. Over the next few days, a group of bluetits visited Clare's garden and chatted away to each other in the silver birch trees nearby. Hopefully Henri(etta) was one of them.

Perhaps his story will enter bluetit legend as a cautionary bedtime tale for nestlings!

Addie Thompson



Beat The Scammers

We have been advised from NCC Trading Standards of three particularly serious scamming schemes which are going around.

First is telephone cold calls claiming to be from 'Visa' debit security department. An incident reported an automated call stating "a payment request of £900 for online shopping from your Visa card has been received. To report this as fraud press 1 immediately."

The wording is designed to panic the recipient into reacting instantly and, if they do, they will be connected to a call handler who will then attempt to procure personal and financial details which could in turn be used to commit further fraud on or with the account.

If you receive this or a similar call, you are advised not to interact with the call. Hang up and contact your bank directly using the Customer Service number printed on your card, on a recent statement or via information available on their genuine website or app.

The second is similar, warning residents about fake PayPal emails which claim that "Your PayPal account will be closed in 90 days". The email, which is designed to mimic genuine PayPal branding, goes on to state that "we have noticed that you haven't logged into your PayPal account in over three years and, as a security and compliance measure, we have placed a restriction on your account and we will close it in 90 days". Finally, the email offers a link to 'Create a new account'. The email isn't genuine, and anyone following the link will be taken to a malicious website which will ask for personal, financial and account details.

The third asks customers of the telecommunications company 'Three' to be on their guard for telephone cold calls. During these calls they will claim that "your number will stop working in 24 hours" or "your SIM card is about to be blocked". The cold caller will then attempt to get you to reveal account, personal and payment information. These calls are Scams and you are advised not to interact with the call and hang up.

Always remember you do not have to make up your mind on the spot, and you should follow the advice above. If you are pressured, say NO or that you have to discuss it with a family member.

Sue Hutcheson

Book Reviews

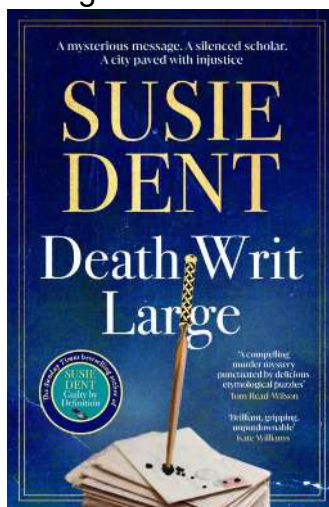
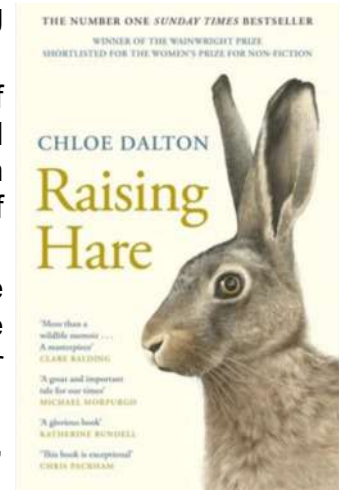
Book group 1

No book was assigned for August so we read a book of our choice with the following results all of which come with our recommendation.

Raising Hare by Chloe Dalton was chosen by two of us. It is the nonfiction story of Dalton's experience of rescuing a day-old leveret. While there is much beautiful description, it also explores how her attitude to her successful busy life changes in favour of looking after and enjoying the hare's life and a deeper understanding of wildlife in general.

Whale Fall by Elizabeth O'Conner is set on a fictitious remote Welsh island where very few people live. When a whale is washed up, anthropologists arrive to study the island and an eighteen-year-old girl hopes to befriend them and leave, or rather escape, her isolated life.

Ellie Griffiths' *The Frozen People* is a time-travelling crime and historical mystery, visiting Dickensian times. Unusual.



Death Writ Large by Susie Dent, published 2026: excellent. A mysterious letter, a silenced scholar, a city paved with injustice. When mysterious symbols appear as graffiti around Oxford, lexicographer Martha Thornhill recognises them from an alphabet created by a deceased writer, whose papers she worked on. But this is no publicity stunt, and tensions intensify when further graffiti is found near the body of a university lecturer.

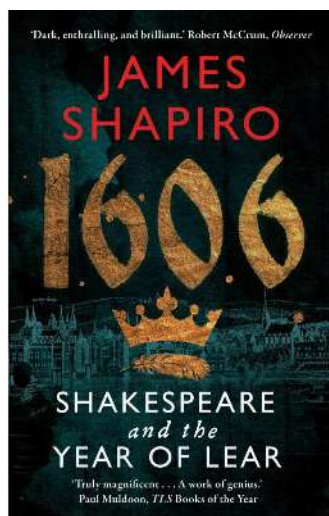
The Prime Ministers We Never Had by Steve Richards: interesting, shedding light on political figures who were so close to being the PM but didn't make it. For example, Michael Heseltine and Barbara Castle and eight more.

Mythica, by Emily Hauser, looks into the possible lives of women mentioned in *The Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Hauser pieces together evidence from the original texts to tell us how they lived, as queens, mothers, warriors and even as slaves. Exceptionally interesting.

Christine Earnshaw

Book group 2

1606 by James Shapiro



Paul Muldoon wrote in the Times Literary Supplement:

"My book of the year ... This is one of those rare academic studies that reads like a novel – a novel with at least one major revelation per page."

Our book group reads primarily novels with the occasional biography thrown in, so reading a book which is a synthesis of literary and historical elements, combined in an attempt to reveal something new about Shakespeare, was a new experience for us.

There is little enough known about Shakespeare, due to lack of evidence, so what could be considered new? Shapiro comes at Shakespeare from a different angle. In 1606 he examines the three plays Shakespeare wrote that year – *Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Anthony and Cleopatra* – in the light of the turbulent events that took place in England at that time.

All had changed. Elizabeth was dead. James was king of England. James was Scottish.

The mood of the nation was troubled. In November 1605 there had been an attempt to obliterate the King and the country's entire political leadership. This terrorist attack would also have killed thousands of Londoners.

It was followed by an armed Catholic uprising in Warwickshire reflecting that the religious debate was in fact also a political one. The uprising was quelled but it left a culture of suspicion and fears of unseen forces in the land.

The start of 1606 saw the gruesome public deaths of the Catholic plotters.

It was announced that November 5th would forever be remembered as the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot. The search for recusants extended to every shire in the land and was underlined by the demand of an oath of loyalty to the protestant King.

King James pressed Parliament for union with Scotland. But there was bitter debate as this issue raised questions about what it really meant to be English or Scottish. There was no appetite for union and in fact James never achieved it in his lifetime.

The plague returned in the summer and hung around stubbornly into October. Theatres were closed. London was not a safe place to be.

In December ships sailed to America to found the first permanent colony at Jamestown. Those ships flew the first version of the Union Jack even though the union did not happen until 1st of May 1707.

Throughout this year in his writing Shakespeare “grasped the dramatic potential of popular reaction to the plot, a maelstrom of fear, horror, a desire for revenge, an all too brief sense of national unity and a struggle to understand where such evil came from.”

Under Elizabeth Shakespeare had written English history plays; now the world had turned and he wrote to examine the issues of allegiance, identity, authority, evil, equivocation.

But he did so under constraint – actors could be jailed for seditious drama. He was however an expert at remaining in the shadows whilst still exploring the issues of the day.

Shapiro, explaining how Shakespeare used his sources to build his plays, leads us skilfully through *Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*. Then he shows us how a playwright who had hit a somewhat dry patch uses the “political firestorms of early Jacobean England” to produce plays in which he sets us on fire with scenes such as the excruciating ending of King Lear.

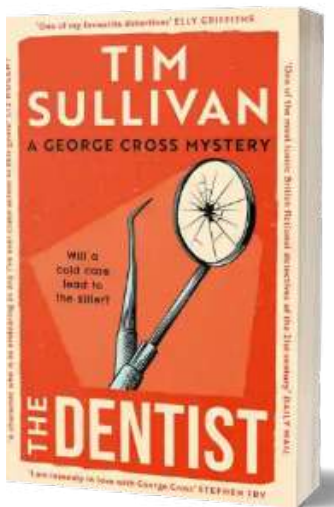
This is an extraordinary book; revelatory in its dense detail of research and ingenious in its linking of history and literature.

Some of us in our group found the book to be too dense, others delighted in its expertise at showing us afresh the master of theatre that Shakespeare was.

Margi Blunden

Crime Book group

The Dentist by Tim Sullivan



There was no Crime Book group held in August, so here is a review of a book that's been read and enjoyed by several of our members. It's *The Dentist* by Tim Sullivan, the first in a series of books featuring DS George Cross and his partner DS Josie Ottey, set in Bristol.

When a homeless man is found murdered on the Downs, the high ups insist that it's a 'homeless on homeless' assault and arrest an ex-soldier who also lives on the streets. Cross is sure they have the wrong man and, as he delves deeper into the victim's background, he becomes convinced that there is a link between the victim and the unsolved murder of the victim's wife many years before. It was the murder of his wife that led to the victim, a much-loved dentist (is there such a thing?) breaking down and ending up on the streets. Cross believes the solution to their present case will be solved with the resolution of the wife's murder, and that the victim had uncovered new evidence pointing to his wife's killer. This leads Cross into a web of complex family relationships and loyalties, and brings him into conflict with his boss and an old colleague.

However, it is not the plot that many readers find most interesting, intriguing though it is. It's the character of George Cross himself. Cross has Asperger's, a condition all his colleagues know about. This could have been

gratuitous and tasteless, but Sullivan handles this superbly, staying true to Cross' character. Cross has survived in today's world by learning how neurotypicals behave in certain situations.

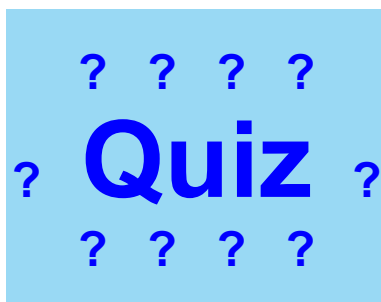
For instance, he'll smile at a witness because he knows that's expected, but he has no idea why a smile is so important. If he feels a discussion with say, his boss, is not productive, he'll just walk out of the room, leaving his boss talking to thin air! However, his lack of small talk and social skills can be an advantage, disconcerting suspects/witnesses and leading them to underestimate him.

His reluctant partner, Ottey, is both Cross' minder and interpreter in social situations. Cross' main strength is his attention to detail, characteristic of someone with Asperger's. He will notice tiny details and discrepancies, picking at them until the case is solved. This has led to him and Ottey having the best clear-up in the force and that is the reason why Cross' foibles are tolerated by his exasperated boss.

Asperger's is 60 - 90% genetic and we are also introduced to Cross' dad, Raymond, who is a hoarder of mechanical bits and pieces and anything else that 'might be useful'. The relationship between Cross and Raymond is really close, as his mother left when Cross was young, and this brings a genuine warmth to the narrative.

Tim Sullivan has written seven more George Cross novels and the Crime Book group members who have read *The Dentist* always want to read more about this unusual detective.

Julie Barnes



General Knowledge

by **Bill Freitas**

1. In September 2025, which Scottish city was officially confirmed as the host for the **2026 Commonwealth Games**?
2. Which body of water is the only sea in the world that has **no coastlines**, being defined instead by four ocean currents?
3. Located in Manchester, which building was granted planning permission in 2025 to become the **tallest building in the UK outside of London**?
4. By winning the **2026 Australian Open** in February, which 22-year-old became the youngest male tennis player in history to complete a career Grand Slam?
5. What is the only **London Underground station** to contain the letter 'z' in its name?
6. Which sovereign nation is the only country in the world to have a national flag that is **not a quadrilateral** (four-sided)?
7. In early 2026, the British Museum announced it would finally put a legendary 7th-century artefact on permanent display after years of restoration. **What is this iconic Anglo-Saxon helmet called?**
8. In October 2025, thieves disguised as construction workers made global headlines by stealing items from the French Crown Jewels from which **famous Parisian museum**?
9. Which iconic British band, after a 15-year hiatus, performed their first reunion show in **Cardiff** in July 2025?
10. **Sanae Takaichi** made history in late 2025 by becoming the first female Prime Minister of which G7 nation?
11. Which city in Northern England is serving as the **UK City of Culture for 2025**?

12. **Picture Question:** What is the name of this remote facility located on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen, designed to store the world's crop diversity in case of a global catastrophe?

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13. In May 2025, the UK's longest direct train service, which had run for over a century between **Aberdeen and Penzance**, was permanently withdrawn. Approximately how many miles did this journey cover?
14. Which South American city has been selected to host the **COP30 UN Climate Change Summit** in late 2025/2026?
15. What is the name of the narrow body of water that separates the **Isle of Wight** from mainland England?
16. Measured by weight, what is the **most expensive spice** in the world, often costing more than its weight in gold?
17. Who was the **Prime Minister of the United Kingdom** in March 2026? [*Which was when Bill wrote the quiz! - Ed*]
18. In September 2025, the **SOLAR-1 (Space Weather Follow On)** observatory was launched to monitor solar flares and coronal mass ejections. Which point in space (named after a French-Italian mathematician) does it orbit?
19. Which English city is famously said to be built on **seven hills**, just like Rome?
20. What is the **loudest animal** on Earth, capable of producing sounds that reach 230 decibels?

Answers are at the end of this Magazine

Forthcoming Meetings

All meetings start at 2:00pm **except Christmas Party 1:00pm**

- 21st September** **My Creative Journey in Fashion** by Amanda Sutherland. Film, television and theatrical costume design, and an accessories business...
- 19th October** Annual General Meeting. Further arrangements to be confirmed.
- 16th November** **Sentiments of Christmas** by Jim Stebbings. Aspects of the traditional Christmas season conveyed through music, stories, humour, images and pictures.
- 14th December** **Christmas Party** Back at the Community Centre by popular demand.
1 pm start! £5 each. Numbers limited to 100. Booking necessary.

For more detailed information about these meetings, please visit the Events page of the Hunstanton u3a website: <https://hunstanton.u3asite.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

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

Magazine Copy Date

Items for the next magazine are required before **MONDAY 12th OCTOBER 2026**. Please send them to David at newsletter@hunstantonu3a.org. You will receive an acknowledgement of your contribution.

Please submit them in WORD, odt (e.g. from Libre Office) or Pages 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. Please convert PDFs to WORD files before sending them, or simply copy and paste the text into an email.

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

A Huge “Thank you” to everyone who has contributed to this issue.

More please!

Answers to the Quiz

1. Glasgow
2. The Sargasso Sea
3. Viadux 2
4. Carlos Alcaraz
5. Belsize Park
6. Nepal
7. The Sutton Hoo Helmet
8. The Louvre
9. Oasis
10. Japan
11. Bradford
12. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault (or "Doomsday Vault")
13. 785 miles (accept anything between 750–800)
14. Belém (Brazil)
15. The Solent
16. Saffron
17. Keir Starmer
18. The L1 Lagrange Point
19. Sheffield
20. The Sperm Whale

That's All Folks!