



December 2025 / January 2026

Chairman's Message

First off, this Newsletter serves the festive month of December as well as the month of epiphany and Good Intentions, January. Christmas - one hardly dare mention the obvious main feature of the month - is nearly upon us. It isn't going to snow, according to the gnostic musings of weathermen, and will scarcely be considered cold. Damp? Of course. Grey? Very probably. A normal Christmas, then? Yep.

An orgy of consumption and unnecessary retail is upon us. You can't help but be aware, as shops were stocking up on mince pies and glitter while you were still wearing a suntan. And the tempo has not slowed. Now that Advent Sunday has come and gone, it's a no-holds-barred race to the Big Day. Got the presents? And the turkey? Don't panic: there's time enough, and there's always Amazon.

Our u3a year comes to a close (though technically not until our AGM in February) and our members have increased in number, as have the number of Interest Groups and their participants. All that is to the good; we continue to fulfil our motto (Learn, Live, Laugh) as we develop and enrich our lives, trying new activities, making new friends, learning new skills and teaching others what we know. This is positive ageing in action.

Since this is January's newsletter too, I should wish everyone a Happy New Year. It'll be a busy one, as we have our 25th Anniversary to celebrate in August, and perhaps some will attend the national u3a Festival in York in July. Before all that, our AGM in February is an event we like everyone to attend, as that's where you elect your Committee and get your ideas and proposals voted on. As I've said many times before, the existence of Grantham u3a hangs by a thread if we are

unable to raise a committee of at least six people. The more we have, the easier it is to share out the tasks and lighten the load. Please step up if you possibly can.

There will be no Coffee Morning in December (falling as it does on the 23 December) and our final Monthly Meeting takes the form of a simple Christmas celebration on the 16 December in the Guildhall Ballroom. On January 20, the Monthly Meeting in the Guildhall Theatre will take place as usual, as will our Coffee Morning on the 27 January in St Wulfram's.

All that remains, then, is to still your beating hearts and quell the excitement. Get the presents wrapped and the turkey stuffed in good time, so that ... *all through the house, not a creature is stirring, not even a mouse.*

My warmest seasonal greetings to you all.

John Foulkes-Jones, Chair

Beacon Administrator / Membership Secretary

Please remember that your membership renewal for 2026 is due by 1st January. As usual, this is most easily achieved by logging into our membership portal and using your bank card.

So far, more than half of our membership has renewed, mainly by this method.

You can do this NOW by [Clicking here](#). Ask a friend who has already done it if you are unsure.

There is only one remaining opportunity to renew in person, and that is the coffee morning in January. It will be difficult, if not impossible, at the Christmas party.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and hoping to see you in the New Year. **Andrew Weston 07836 250972 Angela Rose 07966 516529**

Pastoral Care

Please let Janet Hine know if you become aware of a member who is ill and would appreciate a message of support, or if a member has died.

Her contact details are: **The Old Parsonage, The Drift, Syston, Grantham, NG32 2BY. 01400 250984**

care.granthamu3a@gmail.com

Tuesday Talks

December 16 The Christmas Party, no Tuesday Talk.

January 20 Jack Perks talks about ‘Britain’s Rivers in Crisis’

Born and bred in Nottingham Jack is primarily a freelance underwater & wildlife cameraman with a deep passion for the natural world. He’s particularly interested in the less liked species such as reptiles, amphibians and fish but does occasionally pay attention to furry and feathery things. Starting out learning photography from 16 he eventually went to university in Falmouth earning a BA (Hons) degree in Marine & Natural History Photography spending most of his days rock pooling and enjoying the local pubs.

Shortly after graduating Jack focused more on moving image and has since worked for dozens of wildlife and angling tv programmes including Springwatch, The One Show, Mr Crabtree Goes Fishing and The Great British Year. Jack also appears in front of the camera and has presented several films for Countryfile. He's gone on to work on David Attenborough’s *Wild Isles* and Filmed in Alaska for an upcoming BBC series.

Freshwater fish are certainly what Jack is best known for being termed the “fish twitcher” by the BBC for hunting around the UK to film every British freshwater fish, a task that took seven years for him to complete and find all 54. From Scottish Lochs to Southern Chalk streams there aren’t many waterways Jack hasn’t dipped in.

Jack has written two books *Freshwater Fishes of Britain* and *Field Guide to Pond & River Wildlife of Britain & Europe*. His work has featured in lots of other books and prominently with long-time collaborator Mark Everard in his book *The Complex Lives of Britain’s Freshwater Fishes*. He has also written for many magazines including BBC Wildlife, Outdoor Photography and Diver to name a few and written regular columns for Anglers Mail and Fallons Angler.

Jack is a proud vice president of Wildfish Conservation and works in partnership with Hammond Drysuits and Fotospeed.

17 February is our AGM

17 March Kevin Lawry will talk about His friend George Pyle. This is a true-life story of an RAF fighter pilot and his adventures just after D Day in June 1944.

21 April David Valerio returns to update us after his very popular appearance in January 2024. His talk is called "*From Ignorance via Intuition to Illumination*"

19 May Bertie Pearce will entertain us with his talk on 'Creating an Imaginary World'

16 June Philip Caine reflects on a life full of travel and challenge as he shares his career in his talk 'From Barrow to Baghdad'

21 July Mike Burton presents his lecture 'Land of Chivalry; 14th Century England'

18 August is our 25th Anniversary celebration

15 September Fran Sandham talks about "In the Forbidden Land: The strange Tibetan adventure of Henry Savage Landor, the real-life 'Baron Munchausen' of Victorian explorers".

20 October Paul Isherwood gives us his talk 'Child Gambler Wins Life Back' This is a tale of how a 10 year old boy lured by the magnetic pull of a slot machine with his addiction spiralling out of control had a light bulb moment and sought help. Now well into his fifties he hasn't gambled ever since.

17 November Lucy Lewis will talk about her career as Britain's first woman Bomb Disposal officer and beyond in 'Lighting The Fuse' .

15 December is our Christmas celebration

**Maggie Ambrose , Speaker Finder
Jenny Lewis, Assistant Speaker Finder**

Coffee Mornings

Coffee Mornings are held in St Wulfram's Church, Grantham, 10.00am - 11.30am on fourth Tuesday of the month and are open to all members. The next meetings are:

December - No Coffee Morning

Tuesday 27 January 2026

Tuesday 24 February 2026

Group News

Wildlife Group

Kerry Brazil

On a very cold November day the group visited Colsterworth nature trail. There are meadow areas on either side of the old railway embankment. We walked the length of the embankment and back.

The River Witham flows through the meadow areas and benches have been placed in scenic locations. There were many "dead hedges". These are a woodland management feature, created by piling up cut branches and woody material. This practice is one of the oldest forms of woodland management, with its roots stretching back thousands of years. It creates wildlife habitats for insects, birds, and small mammals.

There were still a few berries on the trees, mainly hawthorn and ivy, but the leaves had all dropped. We noted a single red kite flying overhead.





Current Affairs

Jean Pritchard

Happy Birthday to us, we are now two years old. As an established group our membership is at the maximum that a sitting room can accommodate. Inevitably, this is a disappointment to other u3a members who have expressed a wish to join us and are currently sitting on the waiting list. As previously mentioned, we are now 2 years old, but we started small and gradually grew - losing and gaining members along the way. Other u3a specialist groups have expanded with the enthusiasm of a potential leader. If you would like to start another Current Affairs Group you will be given support and encouragement to get it up and running - please have a word with Janet Hine, Grantham u3a Groups' Coordinator,

OPENERS: Keeping Mr. Mountbatten Windsor off the front pages on 12 November was the BBC editing of Donald Trump's speech. Manipulation of news is not acceptable. This gave us plenty to talk about with Panorama's record of underhand dealings to get a story - remember Martin Bashir's skulduggery to get the interview with Princess Diana? Salaries to well-known presenters is out of proportion to their roles. Personalities such as Jimmy Saville were allowed to carry on broadcasting despite their conduct being 'an open secret'. BBC's culture needs to change. Who can we trust if not our British Broadcasting Corporation?

CHINA: Resistance to China's massive new Embassy in London was reported. There have been large-scale protests against the embassy and outrage when China refused to explain why large parts of the plans in the basement of the building were *greyed out*. Over 400 Yutong electric buses have been ordered across the UK. Security experts warned that they could be deactivated from China 'in a major act close to war' which would wreak havoc on Britain's transport

network. Although a Yutong spokesman said their “vehicles in Europe do not support remote control of acceleration, steering or braking”.

ELECTRIC CARS: The UK’s proposed 2p per mile EV charge to drivers was expected to be announced in the 26 November budget. This tax aims to fill the significant £24 billion gap created by falling fuel duty revenue as drivers switch from petrol/diesel to EVs. During our discussion it became obvious to the older members of our group who have not ‘gone electric’ with how technology has left us behind with onboard satnav showing drivers where the nearest available charging station is. We were not convinced by the argument that a half hour coffee break to wait for the car to recharge is acceptable. Will the Government be on top of keeping the roads in good condition with more of these weighty cars using them? Denmark is trialling roads with simultaneous EV recharging ability.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS: Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood is looking at how Denmark transformed their asylum system by removing incentives that draw people to the country and increasing the number of returns and deportations of illegal migrants. This initiative had reduced the number of asylum applications in 2024 to the lowest in 40 years.

DESIGNER BABIES: How valid is the science? If it does work what are the implications? Scientists have developed ways of measuring the impact of all the known genetic influences and adding them up to make a polygenic score indicating, for instance, someone’s risk of heart disease or likely IQ. So far this is only being used for research. In USA some firms have seized the chance to offer such genetic profiling to people using IVF. It’s still illegal in UK.

NHS -v- UK FLAGS: NHS staff are anxious for their personal safety when entering certain areas of their towns because of the proliferation of national flags, causing unrest among some residents.

It has been a busy time for the u3a Scottish Dancers. First we had an invitation from Gregory House Care Home,



and then it was Hallowe'en when several of the u3a dancers who also dance in the Waltham group joined other witches and worked their magic spells at their weekly class.



November found the u3a dancers having fun with the Barkston Guides and Brownies. First it was the Brownies, then they were joined by the Guides to enjoy some simple reels and jigs. The end of the evening saw the arrival of parents to collect the Guides who thought it would be great fun to get the parents involved in some dancing.



Scots around the world celebrate their patron Saint on St Andrew's Day and we had a busy time with jigs, reels and strathspeys, beginning by entertaining residents of Royal Windsor Care Home -



and then on the day itself, St Andrew's Church in Boothby Pagnall had a Patronal service with a piper and a drummer at the beginning and we danced at the end, with a few of the congregation joining in.



A visit to Maple Leaf Lodge Care Home finished off our St Andrew's Day celebrations.

January will see flurry of activity with haggis for Burns Suppers. In the meantime the u3a Scottish Country Dancers wish other u3a members a very Merry Christmas and all the very best for 2026.

If you have plans for New Year resolutions involving visits to the gym, why not try Scottish Country Dancing? It exercises the brain as well as the body and we think it is much more fun than the gym!

Bus Pass Group

Janet Neal

The few of us who braved the below freezing temperatures were amply rewarded for our efforts at our November outing. We ventured out to Lakeside Arts on the Nottingham University campus to see an astonishing exhibition by Kate McGwire - "Quiver". The exhibition is on until January 4th should these couple of photos have piqued your interest. We found ourselves a lovely warm and sunny spot in the

smaller Gallery Cafe in the Djanogly building for our usual coffee and natter. On our return to the city centre we had time for a quick look around the Old Market Square, currently transformed into a Winter Wonderland complete with a big wheel, a double decker ice rink, and lots of festive stalls. We had a lovely day out and we thoroughly recommend both the exhibition and the Winter Wonderland.

Incidentally, the number 93 bus to Nottingham was full! Hopefully this is a good indication that the service will continue beyond March when, so I understand, the service will be reviewed.



Local History

Anne Rudderham

Several members were able to make our last meeting of the year when we visited Grantham Museum for a social get-together, see the recent refurbishments thanks to a contribution from SKDC's Future High Street Fund (the new heating system is certainly welcome!), view the new and changes in exhibitions and hear about its future plans from Shan Davis, Museum Manager. One hope is that, now the basement has been restored and can finally be used, local artefacts which are

currently housed in Lincoln can be returned to the town where they belong. There is still much to do but having to rely on volunteers, this will obviously take time and the museum is trying hard to raise more funds from various sources, one of which is asking supporters to become a Friend which for £25pa offers discounted tickets to their new monthly talks programme along with 10% off museum merchandise and a 10% discount off food and drink at Digby's Coffee Shop next door in The Guildhall. More details about how to join and future events from <https://granthammuseum.org.uk>.

With the festive season now upon us, many local historical buildings will be open for you to visit as they offer open house, artisan fayres and markets, tree festivals as well as concerts and religious services. We are so fortunate in this area to have beautiful National Trust properties (Belton House, Grantham House, Woolsthorpe Manor) as well as those which are still privately owned (Belvoir Castle, Grimsthorpe Castle and Burghley House) along with Harlaxton Manor and St Wulfram's Church, not forgetting Lincoln with its magnificent cathedral, castle, cobbled streets and medieval buildings - all there for us to enjoy. These and many others all offer an opportunity to visit whilst they're looking their seasonal best but if you want to avoid other people who may have the same idea (and are already counting the pennies!) and just want a walk and a bit of fresh air, there are some lovely villages and churches around here to explore which are full of period properties and ancient hedgerows/woodlands and maybe you'll find a pub with a roaring fire as an added bonus! Grantham town itself also offers interesting walks especially around its historical quarter and there's also Wyndham World War I Memorial Park with its many information boards and where the legacy of Lt Hon William Reginald Wyndham, 1st Life Guards, who was killed in 1914 lives on.

For the more energetic or adventurous there's the Foston Fossil Trail, which includes historical features like St Peter's Church, the Old Hall, remnants of medieval ploughing (ridge and furrow) and opportunities to find "Devil's Toenails" fossils; the Viking Way (a long-distance footpath that runs through the area and you can walk a section of it such as the stretch that goes from Marston to Woolsthorpe) or walk or cycle along the Grantham Canal, now a valuable wetland habitat with most of it a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which runs through the arable landscape of the Vale of Belvoir.

As we look back over the past 12 months, we've welcomed several new members (taking our total membership to date to 64) and enjoyed another varied programme. In January, Peter Liddle gave

us a fascinating talk on the Rutland Roman Villa and our visits have included the Museum of Lincolnshire Life and guided tours of John Taylor's Bellfoundry in Loughborough along with Stamford, Burghley House, Melton Mowbray, the National Holocaust Centre & Museum and All Saints Church in Hough-on-the Hill, and whilst we didn't get to go to the WWII Homefront Museum in Boston or hear the talk on Southwell Workhouse these has been added to next year's programme.

My grateful thanks to all those members who kindly helped to organise these - it is very much appreciated - and also to those who contribute in other ways whether it be by offering transport, collecting fees, taking photos, putting forward ideas or helping to put future programmes together and for some this is in addition to their other u3a commitments such as being a Group Leader or member of the committee. Our next meeting will be on Weds 14 January, , where we'll meet on this occasion in a new venue for us - Grantham Library - and will welcome Paul Scott who'll provide a talk on Sir Joseph Banks.

Wednesday Walking Group

Ed Bowman

In our first full year as the current Wednesday Walking Group, members have enjoyed a variety of monthly walks in Lincolnshire and bordering counties. We've aimed to do a 3 mile or thereabouts, circular walk, followed by a pub meal - designed and recce'd by a few members who've volunteered as walk leaders.

An outline of the expected walk conditions is always sent out prior to the walk, so members can decide whether or not they want to come along. We normally travel by car, and lifts can normally be arranged for those who don't drive.

If you would like to join us, there are a few membership places left. To do so, please contact me either via the u3a Groups' secretary, or send a message to my mobile 07960 722484, with your contact details.





Guitar group

Graham Welham

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

A warm welcome to Nick Daperis, who joined the guitar group, in November. Hope you enjoy your time, playing along with the guys in the group.

November was a quiet month for gigs. We went out and played for the residents at Brick Kiln Place in evening of 13 November. I've included of photos of the group playing and entertaining that evening.





The residents at Brick Kiln were a great audience to play for and certainly enjoyed themselves that evening. I'm in the process of doing some video recording of our group at events such as Brick Kiln which we might put forward as part of our contribution towards next year's u3a anniversary event.

In the run up to Christmas we have just one gig; that's a return gig to The Cree centre on the 12 December. It's great to support and entertain the care team, carers and all the young people who will be there on the day.

We have had other gig enquiries come through, but unfortunately these did not turn into gigs we could go out to due to being well out of the Grantham area. (Travel time being more than half an hour from Grantham). Having said that, if anyone wants to book the guitar group for an event / occasion please contact us through either the Grantham u3a website, or direct to me via e-mail.

grahamwelham@hotmail.com

Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année 2026 de la part du groupe Discutons!

Pete, David, John, Brenda, Nim, Andrew, Angela, Barbara et Korin!

Au lieu de Discutons!, Chantons!

Il est né le Divin Enfant
Jouez haut bois, résonnez musettes
Il est né le Divin Enfant
Chantons tous son avènement

Depuis plus de quatre mille ans
Nous le promettaient les prophètes
Depuis plus de quatre mille ans
Nous attendons cet heureux temps

Il est né le Divin Enfant
Jouez haut bois, résonnez musettes
Il est né le Divin Enfant
Chantons tous son avènement

Oh, qu'il est beau, qu'il est charmant
Que ses grâce sont parfaites
Qu'il est beau, qu'il est charmant
Qu'il est doux ce Divin Enfant

Il est né le Divin Enfant
Jouez haut bois, résonnez musettes
Il est né le Divin Enfant
Chantons tous son avènement

Il est né le Divin Enfant
Jouez haut bois, résonnez musettes
Il est né le Divin Enfant
Chantons tous son avènement

Christmas Crinkles

- 50g cocoa
- 1 tbsp instant coffee
- 200g caster sugar
- 60ml vegetable oil
- 2 eggs
- 180g plain flour
- 1tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 70g icing sugar



Put the cocoa, coffee, sugar and oil in a bowl and whisk together. Add the eggs and whisk again, then add the flour, baking powder and cinnamon. Mix well until it comes together. Roll into 18 to 20 balls and roll each in icing sugar to coat. Place on lined baking trays and bake for 11 – 12 minutes at 160°C; the edges should be set and the centres soft.

Amaretti Biscuits

Whisk 2 egg whites until stiff then fold in 1 tbsp amaretto liqueur together with 175g each of caster sugar and ground almonds. Roll into large teaspoon sized balls and toss in icing sugar till coated. Place on lined baking sheets spaced well apart and bake for 20 minutes at 150°C until lightly golden brown and slightly puffed.



**Thank you to all contributors to the December / January edition.
Please send your contributions for the February newsletter to
ed.granthamu3a@gmail.com by Friday 6 February.**

I would like to wish all of you a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas
and Happy New Year.

Di Hale

